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Author of "The Pettyshams," &c.

VOL. II.

London:
T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1870

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250. y 117.

CONTENTS OF SECOND VOLUME.

Chap.		Page.
I.	A pretty Kettle of Fish! ...	1
II.	At Havre and London ...	28
III.	The Next Morning	45
IV.	Messrs. Trump, Sequence and Co.	61
V.	Convalescent?	82
VI.	Stormy! Glass Rising ...	99
VII.	The Campaigner "carries the Fortress"	120

CHAP. PAGE.

VIII.—Susan 137

IX.—Fiddle-de-dee! 153

X.—"Markworth versus Hartshorne" 174

XI.—"The Girl I left behind me" ... 185

XII.—Counter Traps 198

XIII.—The Biter bit 216

XIV.—Doctor Jolly goes abroad ... 238

XV.—End of "Second Act" 254

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

CHAPTER I.

"A PRETTY KETTLE OF FISH!"

IMAGINE the unexpected arrival of the murdered Duncan's wraith at Macbeth's correct little dinner party, just after the soup had been removed—a break-down of the Prima Donna at the Opera, while executing some grand *scena*—or, in these High Church days of fashionable banns-publishing, the sudden

uprising of some stern parent or Nemisitical Mawworm, to interrupt the glib utterance of the 'hair-parted-down-the-middle and lavender-kid-gloved curate of the period with the solemn veto, in basso profundo voice, "I forbid the banns!"—and you will have some idea of the alteration and effect which the young imp's mischief created in the programme of Lady Inskip's pic-nic.

The whole company soon hurried after the doctor in real alarm; even Captain Curry Cucumber, forgetting his liver, and the not-fit-for-much-exertion officers, their lisp and laziness, were in a few moments on the scene of the accident: whither too, Laura presently appeared, leaning on Pringle's arm; for she honestly was nervous, and had been really frightened.

It was a very dramatic *pose.*

Tom was lying on the ground, half-supported in Lizzie's arms, a red stream of blood trickling down from his right side, while Doctor Jolly was bending over him, dashing water in his face.

It is wonderful how much more composed in scenes of suffering and danger women are than men, that is when their services are required. Tell a girl that a man is shot or someone drowned, and she will immediately, perhaps, burst into tears, and wail and ring her hands; but tell her to hold his head up, or fetch water—only to do something, and she will be as composed as you please, and will set about doing the work far more steadily and usefully—in a workmanlike manner, so to speak—than you could get any man to do it.

Women are all nurses and sick-attendants at heart: there are more Florence Nightingale's among us than we know of, until time and occasion draws them out of seclusion, and displays them in their true colours.

Here was Lizzie, who a moment before had been crying, wringing her hands and inclined to faint, now as composed as possible, although very pale and tearful, just because the doctor had employed her services, and showed her how to be useful.

"Bless my soul! little girl; don't stop crying there. Hold his head up, while I get some water." And Lizzie had raised Tom's head as tenderly as if it had been a piece of Sévres china, and moved it on to her lap, while her arm passed round him. She did not mind his weight a bit, and could have thus supported him all day without feeling

tired, although Tom was pretty heavy. Love lightens loads wonderfully!

The doctor bustled off down to the river's brink, and quickly fetched back some water in his smart new white hat; he did not mind that, however, for he would at any time sacrifice anything he had to give ease or pleasure to another.

By the time the others came up, Tom opened his eyes, and looked dreamily around.

"Hullo! what's the row? where am I?"

"Bless my soul! you're a nice fellow you are, alarming us all like this. Do you feel better now? Where's the pain? Does that hurt you, eh! or that?" said the doctor, who had removed Tom's waistcoat, and was poking him about in the side with his fat fore-finger.

"Ugh!" ejaculated Tom, as Æsculapius

bore rather heavily on a tender spot in his ribs, but he took no further notice of his enquiries, for he was gazing up into Lizzie's anxious face; unless you take a murmured "Lizzie, my darling," spoken so softly that only one person heard it, as an answer to the doctor's questions.

"Speak, you young rascal! You can speak well enough; I heard you, you rogue. Bless my soul! I heard you."

Tom laughed faintly, and a little pink colour came into Lizzie's face. "I'm all right, doctor, thanks. I'll be well in a minute." He made an effort to rise, as the others gathered around, and a perfect gabble of questions without answers ensued. "I'm all right;" but his head fell back again in Lizzie's lap, and a dead-like pallor once more overspread his face.

Tom's actions belied his words. He was not by any means all right. Two of his ribs were broken by the heavy shot, nearly the size of slugs, that the young imp, Sir Mortimer had loaded his gun with; and if Tom had been hit on the left side, it would have been a case of *requiescat in pace* for him and all his troubles. As it was, he would be laid up for some time, perhaps for months.

The doctor saw this, and interrupted the old campaigner, as she was saying for Lizzie's especial benefit, in her honeyed accents, which had a concealed sting beneath them—"How very sad! What a very charming picture; but if I were a young girl—"

"We would try and make ourselves useful? Bless my soul! my lady, we must try and get him home. Here, one of you," he said, turning to the males, who stood aloof looking at

one another, and doing nothing, in the manner customary to them on such occasions—"run up to the cottage where the carriages are left—"

Three or four immediately started off, without an idea of what they were about.

"Stop!" shouted the doctor, "what are you going for? Ask for a door, mind you; take one off the hinges, by Gad! if you can't get it any other way; and steal a mattress and some pillows! Lay them inside the largest of the pony carriages, and bring it down here as quick as you can. Bless my soul! and don't walk as if your legs did not belong to you!" whereupon all, with the exception of the Reverend Jabez Heavieman and the Indian warrior, hied them off on the errand, although one or two could have easily performed the service. The ladies, however, still

grouped themselves in picturesque attitudes round the wounded man, and gazed on him as if he were a rare geological specimen, to be inspected scientifically. "Ah! he moves," said one; "I think he raised his arm," put in Aliquis; "He breathes! he breathes!" exclaimed Lady Inskip, with tragic joy, such as the "heavy old lady" of the piece admirably puts on when she throws her arms round the villain's neck, and putting her chin on his left shoulder, gives vent to the agonised words—"My chee-ild! my chee-ild!"

The doctor, however, was too full of common sense to make any allowance for heroics.

"Move aside, can't ye?" he shouted out stentorially, "move aside, can't ye? and let the poor fellow have some air. It's enough to stifle him, all of you sticking around like this, doing nothing, and preventing a breath

of wind from coming past your krinlins! The poor chap wants air; and he must have it!" And the doctor, rising up, and stretching out his hands, like street acrobats when they wish to clear a space for their performance amidst the encircling crowd, the ladies retreated, headed by the campaigner, who held her nose in the air, as if the whole thing was "much beneath her," leaving the doctor and his patient, and Miss Lizzie, for awhile to themselves. Only the young imp remained behind to gaze with eyes of curiosity on his handiwork, until the doctor sent him to the right-about, by asking him the pertinent question, "What the doose are you stopping for? By Gad! don't you think you've done enough for one day?" when he, too, drew on one side, and left the trio alone.

After a few moments' pause, by dint of

having repeated hadfulls of water dashed into his face, Tom again revived and opened his eyes.

Shortly he looked much better, and was able to answer the doctor's enquiries. He raised himself half up, turning over on his left side—"Oh, yes, doctor, I'm nearly all right. By Jove! though, don't that hurt," he said, as our friend still continued to examine him—"I'll soon be right, won't I, doctor? Thank you, but don't press so hard! And thank you," he said, turning his eyes round and upon her—"my darling"—he murmured, softly, "what a trouble I am to you." But, strange to say, Lizzie did not look as if she thought it a trouble at all!

The doctor was plunged in deep thought. "Humph! very serious, very serious," he

exclaimed, shaking his head solemnly, at the same time with a sly twinkle in his eyes—"Very serious, very serious, Master Tom. You've got two ribs smashed, sir, and I think you want to have another. Ha! Ha! Sly dog, sly dog. Never mind, it's a beautiful contusion! Luckily it wasn't the other side, or we would have had your heart gone."

"I'm afraid it's gone already, doctor," observed the wounded hero, gazing artfully round at Lizzie, who looked very conscious, "but shall I be able to get round soon?" and he tried to get up, but fell back again into his former position, and looked as if he were going to faint.

"Oh, don't move, pray don't move," Lizzie said, laying her hand on his shoulder entreatingly: Tom seized that opportunity to make

the little hand a prisoner. Very interesting, was it not, for the old campaigner, who was looking on grimly from a distance?

"Don't budge, you young rascal; don't you stir, or we'll have you fainting again, and looking interesting, like my lady, yonder," and the doctor sniggered, for his eyes were sharp, and, I believe, he had fathomed the campaigner's little game—"Don't stir, my boy. You must keep quiet now, but we'll have you on your legs again in a few days."

The biggest of the pony carriages, accompanied by a band of gentlemen followers, now drew up in the glen, close to the gnarled old oak, by the stump of which the unlucky object of young Sir Mortimer's gun practice was reclining.

Doctor Jolly inspected the vehicle to see whether all his directions had been obeyed;

and, finding an old door laid across the seats, on which was a mattress and a bundle of pillows, he said, "That's right, boys. Now bear a hand, and we'll get him in."

Supported by the brawny Æsculapius, and the offered arms of a score of others, Tom was lifted carefully into the chaise, and arranged comfortably amidst the pillows.

"Now," said the doctor aloud, for the benefit of the company, apparently, but in reality, I think, for little Lizzie's sake, "I want some lady to go along with us, to hold his head up, and carry the salts—I want smelling salts, too —or a vinaigrette, or something of that sort."

All the ladies eagerly proffered help, but they were headed by Lady Inskip, who exclaimed—

"Here's my darling child Carry, who is so anxious, and will be so glad to go:" a dozen

fair hands also held up gorgeous little silver-topped vinaigrettes.

The doctor looked upon them all reflectively.

"Humph!" he said, sententiously, "I don't think any of you will do. I shall take Miss Pringle here; she's undertaken the case, and she may as well complete the cure."

The campaigner looked fearfully disgusted. She turned to Pringle, B.A., and said, as if speaking confidentially to them, but for the express benefit of the doctor and Lizzie, as she spoke so that all might hear her—

"Of course I would not like to interfere with a medical man, Mr. Pringle; but do you think it is quite correct for a young girl like your sister to go off in that way with a young man without any chaperone?"

"No indeed, Lady Inskip—no, indeed,

Lady Inskip. Of course you know best; ah! and ah! Lizzie—"

"Bless my soul!" said the doctor, excitedly, "I don't see why Miss Lizzie cannot go just as properly as your daughter, my lady! It's all nonsense, and she shall go!" And the doctor, without asking anybody's leave or license, at once handed Lizzie into the pony carriage by the side of Tom. Getting in himself, and telling the campaigner cordially "Good-day, my lady! good-day," he drove off triumphantly, although slowly, out from the glade, in and out of the trees, on to the road, and so slowly homeward to The Poplars, with our wounded hero lying back in Lizzie's arm—a very different plight to the gallant turn-out in which Tom had set out so hopefully in the morning for Lady Inskip's *fête champêtre.*

The campaigner was certainly defeated to some extent, but she was not discomfited. Oh! dear, no. She had secured one of her birds—Pringle—at all events, for he was as devoted as she could wish to Laura; and as for the other, although he had been brought down, winged is the word—so unfortunately by the young imp, still, all was not lost there yet—she had only to act, and it would run hard, so she thought, if she did not succeed in throwing on one side "that artful little minx."

She now bethought herself of her company. The day was far spent, and she was not going to let the whole thing break up in such an unsatisfactory manner. She was too knowing for that; consequently she threw cold water on the manifest sympathy for Tom.

"Pooh!" she said, "it's not much. The

doctor said he would be well in a day or two, it's only a mere scratch!"

Of course several joined in with her, and followed suit. When Lieutenant Harrowby ventured to suggest that it "must be vary painful, you know, *ba—iey Jo—ve!" he was caught up at once by the choleric Captain Curry Cucumber, "Nice soldier you are, my fine fellow! to think so much of a mere flea-bite—a mere flea-bite. By Jingo! when I was at Rhamdaghur—" And he was going to retail some of his East-Indian reminiscences, when he was adroitly stopped by the campaigner's suggesting that they should return to the festal board, which all thereupon did, sitting down again with much gusto to the remnants of the feast.

The evening waxed on, and then they packed up, and sallied homewards. It is

wonderful what a little break the absence or injury of one makes in a large party. The proverb, "out of sight, out of mind," is true enough, although it contradicts that other veracious proverb, which tells us that "absence makes the heart grow fonder!"

Pringle and the young officers finished the evening very agreeably with the Inskip girls at their residence, the former not agitating himself much about his sister, "of whom," the campaigner observed, "she was sure Doctor Jolly would take every care, notwithstanding his rudeness to her!" So everything went well with Lady Inskip, and the picnic was voted a success, although Captain Curry Cucumber dubbed her "an infernal old harridan, by Jingo!" and wished he had had her "out at Rhamdaghur, by Gad!" and he would have taught her how to "insult an army-man,

by Jingo!" in taking no notice of him, while she "could pamper a —— civilian, by Gad!"—alluding, we very much fear, to the Revd. Herbert Pringle, to whom the campaigner had been really very ingratiating. If only that accident had not happened, who knows what other success might not have fallen to her share! But Lady Inskip had the satisfaction that night of boxing Mortimer's ears.

As the pony carriage drove very slowly, it was evening, nearly night, by the time Tom and his companions arrived at The Poplars: the house was wrapped in gloomy silence.

The doctor jumped down quickly, and Lizzie after him, when she took the opportunity of saying to him, quickly, "I will wait here, doctor, until you come out, and do tell me then how he is!" She wished Tom good-bye,

and walked on, apparently home to the parsonage, but she waited at the corner, and peeped back to see him carried in; after which she shrunk into the shades again to the garden-gate of The Poplars, and waited patiently for the doctor to come out.

The dowager, herself, answered the gate, outstripping "Garge" in getting there first. The doctor, having rapidly explained matters, and told her not to be alarmed, she spoke up at once sharply to the point.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" she said. "I'm a woman, Doctor Jolly; but I'm not a fool, and you won't find me crying like an idiot!"

Whereupon the orders were given to George, who looked on with stolid wonder and grief, and between them they carried Tom into the house and laid him on his bed, where the

doctor saw him tranquilly composed, and told him cheerily he would be all right to-morrow.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" said the dowager, half to herself, in a muttering tone. "Here's Thomas wounded, and Susan gone away, one doesn't know where!"

"What! Susan gone?" enquired the doctor anxiously.

"Drat it all, man! It doesn't matter. I was only bothering about her being out in the garden so late; that's all!"

"Bless my soul!" said the doctor, quieting down—"you nearly frightened me to death! But I must see about Tom now!"—and there the conversation about the missing girl dropped.

The old lady had but just discovered the absence of the girl, and Miss Kingscott had

disclaimed any knowledge as to her whereabouts. The fright of the dowager, however, about Tom, made her forget the other trouble for a time, particularly as Susan had often before stopped out late in the garden. She would not be really alarmed about her daughter till the morning.

Now, she was in a fearful state of anxiety about Tom, although she tried, with the dogged obstinacy of her nature, to affect indifference; but she was heartily glad when Doctor Jolly said he would do very well, and that he would come the first thing in the morning to see him.

It was night now, quite late; and the bright harvest moon was shining down out of a clear blue sky with all its August fulness, marking out every feature of the landscape

with all that clearness of outline and vivid contrast of brilliant, blueish light and dark shadow which only moonlight gives.

Not a breath stirred the summer night. The tall, melancholy poplars around the Hartshorne's house looked even more dismal by night than by day, with their ungainly shapes sharply defined against the sky, and their shadows more gloomy and eerie than those of the other trees; yet still Lizzie leant against the gate and waited, Heaven knows how anxiously! for Doctor Jolly's re-appearance.

The poor little thing had now been there, outside the gate, for more than two hours; as the doctor had been long engaged hearing about Susan's disappearance, which he also made light of, besides seeing to Tom's com-

fort and arrangements when they had lifted him into his bed and undressed him—for he was nearly helpless now.

He at length came out, however; and he had no sooner got out of the gate than Lizzie, who was eagerly watching for him, clutched his arm, and outspoke her dreadful anxiety, "Oh! doctor, dear doctor, is there any hope? He looked so pale and helpless, and—and—he will die! He will die!"

Her little wistful face looked up with such distressing enquiry into his jovial, weather-beaten countenance, that Doctor Jolly felt his eyes grow very hazy, and blew his nose vigorously.

"Certainly, my dear, certainly! That is, there is plenty of hope, Miss Lizzie. Bless

my soul! plenty of hope. You see, we've extracted all the shot (Lizzie shuddered), and he's a strong and hearty young fellow, and he'll be round again before we know where we are."

"Thank you, doctor," Lizzie said, pressing his arm: the doctor felt that her simple words expressed more then than a hundred sentences might have done from others.

The doctor saw her home, and cheered her up wonderfully, so that she actually laughed before she quitted him at the parsonage gate. They seemed to have a secret understanding about the wounded hero, although neither had expressed it in words. Indeed, Doctor Jolly had been so much taken up in soothing his companion, that he quite forgot to mention anything about Susan's being missed. And

all the time, the hours were gliding by, and the chances for her recovery were becoming more and more indefinite.

Verily! a very pretty kettle of fish.

CHAPTER II.

AT HAVRE AND LONDON.

LATE on the evening of the day after the marriage in London, Markworth and his charge—lately his "sister," now *Madame sa femme*—arrived at the half-seaport town, half-fashionable watering place of *Havre-de-Grace*, at the mouth of the slowly running Seine, tawny as the yellow Tiber.

Susan had not been brought to the Continent without serious prior deliberation.

Markworth, in the first place, wished to avoid observation at the present time; and he was so well-known in London, that he thought it would be folly to remain there any longer than necessary; and, in the second place, he wanted to secure a quiet retreat wherein to lodge Susan.

He determined, of course, to keep his hold on her until her friends were assured of the marriage; and as she might be traced, and he, perhaps, arrested for abducting the girl, before he was able to lay a legal claim to her inheritance, the best plan for him to pursue was to "go across the water," as he expressed it, for awhile—as, indeed, a good many other gentlemen, who have sympathizing friends amongst the trading interests of the great

city of Babylon-the-Less have done, and annually do still.

What place so convenient, he thought, as Havre? So to Havre he accordingly ran over the next day, and in that pleasant little town he sat down awhile, to consider what his next movement should be, as he had to study each move carefully. He had plenty of money for present expenses; he had "the goose;" the only thing now to do was to get the "golden eggs." As he had gone so far, he certainly was not going to be baulked now, he thought. And his chances must have been good, or that cautious old Jew, Solomonson, would not have "backed him." He had only got to play his cards properly, and look about him awhile. That was all! Yes, that was all.

He could not have chosen a more con-

venient and comfortable place in France, all things considered, for his purpose.

Perhaps, an exceptional reader—I say "exceptional" advisedly—may have stopped at Havre after crossing over from Southampton—stopped a sufficient time to learn and know the place, for the generality of travellers who adopt this route to Paris, usually go on straight to their destination without breaking their journey at this picturesque old town, which is a sort of "half-way house" on the direct road. If so, the "exceptional reader" will bear me out in my observations on the subject and place.

Havre is like Liverpool and Boulogne rolled into one harmonious or inharmonious whole. It has all the shipping and maritime population—although perhaps the latter are more gaily dressed—of the great entrepôt on

the Mersey, with all the thorough Gallic attributes of a French watering place.

Down in the town, Havre proper, it is all trade and bustle as befits a great commercial port; up amidst the heights of Ingdeville, it is fashionable and fantastic, with its trim white terraces and green, gay Venetian blinds, and its lovely view of the bay beyond. Havre is really not considered half as much as it ought to be, and forms a much more enjoyable spot for a holiday than many of these fearfully uneventful and racketty fashionable resorts, which are generally patronised by English tourists on the Continent.

Liverpool it is like, with its muddy Seine—like the other river that runs between Birkenhead and its sister city—and its bustling streets and quays. Liverpool, with a touch of Ratcliffe Highway, on account of the parrots

and foreign birds, mostly South American, that you see troops of sailors marching about with, besides the strong touch of the military element which one more frequently observes by the side of Tower Hill, than in the parallel city of trade in Lancashire. A French Liverpool, very Frenchified, and jovial and gay, with that foreign dash of sprightliness and *insouciance* which is never seen in England.

Here Markworth hired lodgings, in the *Rue Montmartre*, of a stout, middle-aged Frenchwoman and her little husband: the latter being a *marchand* of something or the other; and by no means the "better half" of the two.

Susan was as pleased as a child with the novelty of everything around her; and if she had been changed for the better at The Poplars, the change was twice as noticeable

now that she had shut out from her all the past with its associations.

Every little item in her new life tended to increase the improvement in her mental organization; besides which Markworth was kind and attentive to her, even more so than he had been before.

Instead of the dingy old melancholy house in Sussex, she was in a bright little French cottage. The old dark rooms were exchanged for a simple *apartement bien garni*, with its tiled floor, and those wonderfully simple accessories which complete the mobilier of our friends on the other side; the half dozen extraordinary-looking straight backed chairs, the round table with its matting beneath, the elaborate fire place with its porcelain belongings, and the mantel-piece with inevitable gilt clock and china shepherdesses.

The fat landlady was very kind, although

she did not speak a word of English; still her husband prided himself on his knowledge of our language, a knowledge nearly limited to that of the Frenchman's of poor Albert Smith's acquaintance, who saying "Ah, Ya—as! I spik Englise—portair—bier—rosbif—God dam!" there wound up the catalogue of his accomplishments.

But Mère Cliquelle was kind in her way. She understood from Markworth that "Madame" was very delicate; and as she had a separate room and looked very pale, Mère Cliquelle tried to make her very comfortable by always nodding to her, and smiling whenever she came into the room, which she was constantly doing to bring Madame sundry little pet dishes or plats of her own *cuisine* and bonbons *ad infinitum*.

Susan was soon very happy, and as gay

as a bird in her new home. She had been sensible enough before; but she was now light-hearted as well.

Markworth devoted himself to her. He would take her out constantly for walks along the bustling quays, where Susan liked to watch the gaily dressed sailors, and the ships and tiny craft in the harbour. Every sailor on landing seemed to bring home half a dozen parrots or crimson birds of the tropics. You never can see such a lot of "imported" birds, as the Americans say, anywhere else, as at Havre.

Susan and Markworth were quite a study for the simple French couple with whom they abode. They thought "Madame" so beautiful and affectionate; and Monsieur, "*Mon Dieu! un galant homme*, and *so* handsome:—a rich Milor Anglais, no doubt."

Thus a month had passed by; and Markworth thought that the time for him to act once more had arrived. His training had not been lost on Susan. Thanks to his indefatigable efforts she was now fully restored, and she would be the best witness he could have in court should he be forced to go to law in order to gain his rights to her money. He had indeed devoted himself to the girl's cure especially for this object, but he had also been led on by a species of real zeal in the case. He had seen from the first how easily Susan, by proper influences, could be led to regain her mind, and had steadily persevered in that direction.

If anyone else had spent as much time and trouble on her long ago, Susan would never have required his aid, but she had been neglected, left alone in that old house; and Doctor

Jolly, with all his cleverness as a medical practitioner, had not understood her case.

Markworth was proud of his triumph, apart from the consideration that his own well-being was interested in Susan's recovery. He was proud that his hand had wrought the cure; and besides, he was really concerned about the girl on her own account. Her entire faith and confidence, and her blind worship, touched even him, while her love had made him have a friendly regard for her, which might or might not grow deeper.

There were one or two good points in his character, as is the case with all bad men. He was not brutal, or naturally bad hearted, but at the same time he was careful of his own interests. If he had got Susan's money, for example, he would not then have turned her adrift. She loved him like a faithful

dog, and it was not in his nature to kick a dog away. He was kind to her because it suited his purpose: it was necessary to her cure, and besides he had no reason to be otherwise.

At the end of a month, therefore, he determined to make some move.

He had seen an advertisement for the lost girl in the "Times," which he had given directions to have sent over to him here. The advertisement had appeared a very few days after the date on which he had removed Susan from The Poplars, and had been continued repeatedly since; but that did not flurry him much. He knew he could not be traced, and as he had no feelings of compunction for the anxiety which might be occasioned by her disappearance, he determined to suit his own

time when to make the news known of her safety and present condition.

He was certain that Clara Kingscott would not give any information about him, as she was a clever woman, and was obliged on her own account not to implicate herself in the abduction of the girl, and was besides anxious to get the remainder of the money he had promised her for aiding him; so he could afford to take his own time and play the game just as he chose, for the cards were in his hand.

He thus let a month run, and Susan being quite happy and settled down in their comfortable lodgings with the Mère Cliquelle in the Rue Montmartre, he thought he would go over to London for a couple of days or so, and set his plans to work. He also wanted

more money, and that was a potent reason for taking him.

Susan was disturbed at first on learning that he was going away, but was as quickly consoled when he promised to be back very soon, and to bring her brother Tom with him; that was the only anxiety she had displayed on leaving her home. She had retained her love for her brother, and she feared he was angry at her leaving. She was delighted consequently to learn from Markworth, as he told her, that he was going to fetch him, for she was not yet aware of the great interests that hung at stake upon her.

Susan saw him preparing to start with many tears, and many directions for him to be back soon; after which Markworth left her to the kindly care of the Mère Cliquelle, who

promised to look after her as her own child: he then crossed the channel.

He first visited his Hebrew friend Solomonson in Chancery Lane, whereby depositing sundry shares he had in a City Company, and giving a bond for about five times the amount, payable on his obtaining his wife's inheritance, he managed to obtain an advance of some hundred pounds to carry him on until the lawsuit should be determined.

Before coming to a final settlement, Markworth bargained some time as usual with the Jew, but had at last to accede to his terms; as it would have been difficult for him to get money from anyone else without stronger security. Indeed, the Jew only trusted him now because he was in a heavy venture, and because also, Markworth had

always behaved honorably to him in his dealings before—and there had been many and various between the parties. But he would require sharp payment would the Jew with all his trust, and should he lose his case, old Solomonson would be the first to be down upon him.

He was apparently, he reflected, spending Susan's fortune before he got it; so he determined to set about securing it now as soon as possible.

Having already perused several times the advertisement for Susan, he knew well where the lawyer's offices were, where he was to apply, and he made up his mind to go there first before—as he called it—"tackling the old dowager."

To Bedford Row, he accordingly bent his stept; and he laughed jocosely, as he went up

the staircase towards Messrs. Trump and Sequence's offices. "What a capital joke it will be," he said to himself, "asking them for that 'Fifty Pounds Reward.' I'm hanged if I don't do it;" and he walked in accordingly to startle Mr Trump.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEXT MORNING.

JUST about the time when the curate of St. Catherine Cross' Church, in London, was asking Markworth whether he would take this woman, M. or N., to be his wedded wife, the dowager and the inhabitants of The Poplars awoke to the certainty that Susan had really gone off somewhere without leaving a trace behind.

She had not come to breakfast; she had not been seen about the premises or in the garden; she had not come into the house or slept in her bed all night; where on earth could she be? It was time, indeed, that some search or enquiry should be instituted.

No time was to be lost!

The old dowager was fearfully excited on being made certain of Susan's disappearance.

She would not believe it at first; and, saying "It's all stuff and nonsense, the girl's hidden somewhere, I know," was not convinced until she had herself in person searched every nook and cranny in the old house from top to bottom.

It was the first time that she had really showed any anxiety about the girl, for the old woman was very much troubled indeed. She was shrewd and business-like as usual,

however, in her enquiries, and first examined everybody in the house before carrying the search further.

Miss Kingscott, the governess, said she had not seen her since the middle of the previous day, and she had supposed at first that she had gone out to walk with Mr. Markworth. She had found out afterwards, however, that that gentleman had driven off early along with "poor Mr. Thomas," she believed, towards the station, and so her pupil could not have gone to walk with him.

Miss Kingscott afterwards informed Mrs. Hartshorne that she missed out of her wardrobe a black silk dress, and a shawl and bonnet. She supposed Susan had taken those with her, as her own walking things had been left behind in her, Miss Kingscott's, room. The old lady said snappishly that "she did

not know what right she, the governess, had to suppose anything of the sort;" but she kept the information in her mind nevertheless.

The old servant, Martha, said she had not seen Miss Susan at all, as "she had too much work of her own in the kitchen for her to do, as was a disgrace for only one servant in sich a large 'ouse as she never see, and it were a burnin' shame it were a workin' one pore old woman worse nor any black nigger slave as ever was, that it were:" so no information was obtained from her.

George, on being summoned in to speak to the "old un," as he called the dowager, said that he had been "at work all t'day a diggin on t'petatus," and he had seen "no leetel miss" about the garden, but he "thort he seed un when he wor a goin' to his dinner, jist arter twelve, awalkin' in the far lot across

t'fields with that gentelmun froom Lunnon, but he warn't shoor."

The old lady called him "an ass and a grinning baboon" for his pains, and told him "get out and go to your work, man!" But George was right, for he had seen them as he said, when on his way back to the house after his visit to the "Jolly Spades," although his vision was then somewhat hazy, and his intellects more obtuse than usual from the large potations of home-brewed he had taken at such an early hour of the day—thanks to Miss Kingscott's liberality to him. The dowager was perplexed, but her cool, calculating temperament was soon at work.

She determined to send at once to her lawyers in London, and calling in the aid of the police to track the fugitive.

Doctor Jolly, too, who came in at this moment to see after Tom—rather earlier than usual for his professional call, but he was anxious about his patient—warmly applauded the dowager's resolve.

He, of course, was also startled at the news that Susan had not been heard of. "Bless my soul!" he said, when all the facts and enquiries that had been made were explained to him. "Bless my soul! It's very strange, very strange, indeed. She could not have stopped anywhere in the neighbourhood, or you would have heard of her before. She must have gone off to some distance. Did she have any money with her?"

"Oh, no!" said Miss Kingscott, to whom he had addressed himself.

"Fool!" spoke out sharply the dowager.

"Why, is it likely that I would give any of my hard-earned money to an idiot to throw away?"

The doctor confessed the improbability of Mrs. Hartshorne's disposing of her surplus funds in the manner suggested, although he was somewhat indignant at the strong epithet applied to himself: he was, however, too much interested on Susan's behalf, to cavil now about words with the old lady.

"Have you asked about her in the village and at the station?" he said, after reflecting a minute or two.

"What is the use of that?" replied the dowager; "all the people know about her at Hartwood, and would have stopped her. But you can ask yourself presently, if you don't mind going down there."

The doctor said he would; and the plan of

the dowager, he thought, would, in the meantime, be the best one to pursue.

"Yes," said Mrs. Hartshorne; "I shall send up to Mr. Trump, in London, at once, and put the matter in his hands. He is a lawyer, and he will know what is best for us to do. I can't say I'm very fond of the girl," observed the dowager, drily, to which Doctor Jolly gave a decidedly affirmative nod; "but I would not like her to come to any harm. But who shall I send? Can you go?"

"Bless my soul!" replied Doctor Jolly. "I would go at once, but there's poor Tom; I can't leave him, for he's in a very ticklish state."

"True—true; poor Thomas! It's a pretty kettle of fish, all this happening just now."

"Let me go, ma'am," said Miss Kingscott, quietly.

"You!" snapped out the old lady. "What's the good of a girl like you going? What can you do?"

"I'm sure a girl can be as good a messenger as anyone else, and I can go at once," answered the governess, calmly; "indeed I'm so interested in my poor pupil, that I should like to do something towards finding her."

"Humph!" grunted the dowager, thinking it over.

"Certainly," put in the doctor; "certainly, madam. Bless my soul! I should like to know why not?"

The thing was agreed to after some further conversation, and Miss Kingscott, charged with a curt epistle from the dowager, and a supply of money from the doctor's own purse—the old lady had not hinted at producing any, and did not advance any demurrer

to his so doing—for paying her expenses on the road, was directed to go to Hartwood Station. She was to ask there whether they had seen Susan, and if she heard no intelligence, she was to proceed direct to London: there she was to call on the lawyers without losing time, explain the whole matter to Mr. Trump, and tell him to come down at once—indeed, she was to bring him down with her if she could.

The governess obeyed her instructions to the letter, and acted all through as if she was as ignorant about Susan's disappearance and her movements as she had professed to be.

She asked about Susan in the village, in order that if any enquiries were made she could substantiate her statement of ignorance. Of course, nobody had heard there of the missing girl, as she very well knew would be

the case. She then went on up to London by the next train, and proceeding at once to the offices to which she was directed, she handed the old lady's letter to the senior partner.

In the meantime, Doctor Jolly was attending to poor Tom's wounds; the wounded hero had passed a very bad night, and was feverish and excitable.

The doctor, who had his suspicions about Markworth, asked one or two guarded questions of Tom as to the whereabouts of his friend. He had been surprised at not seeing the exquisite at Lady Inskip's pic-nic: with his downright common sense, aided by his dislike and suspicions of Markworth, he thought that there must be some connection at first between Susan's disappearance and the absence of the other.

Tom's answers to his questions, however,

fairly puzzled him, and the doctor was thrown off the scent entirely.

Tom said, in reply to one of the doctor's casual enquiries, that he had driven Markworth over to Hartwood Station himself before he had gone on to the pic-nic. That his friend had been suddenly summoned up to town the previous morning, and that he expected him back very shortly, as he said he might not be detained long; although Tom added, "he had taken his traps with him."

"Oh, he has? has he!" answered the doctor. "Well, I daresay we'll have him down soon again though, and then you will be able to get about again with him."

He cheered up Tom, who was very crestfallen and hippish with the pain he had undergone, and the thoughts of being kept a prisoner in bed whilst he so much wished, particularly

now on account of Lizzie, to be able to move about.

"Bless my soul!" said the old fellow, cheerfully, as he went out, "why, you will be right again in a jiffey. We have got all that beastly shot out of you, and the place is healing beautifully. I tell you what I will do, too, Master Tom," he added, nodding his head knowingly, with a twinkling of his kind grey eyes—"I'll tell a certain little girl how we are getting on; I know she will feel interested!"

"Thank you, doctor; you're a trump, by Jove!" said Tom, gladly, "and give her my compliments."

"Hang your compliments, you young rascal; I'll give you her love when I come back!" and the doctor laughed himself with a cherry ho! ho! ho! out of the room, down

the staircase, to the dining-room below, where Mrs. Hartshorne—the old lady looking quite broken already from the anxiety she had gone through—was waiting to hear his report about Tom.

They had decided not to tell him yet about Susan in his present state—not, at all events, until the lawyer came down.

The doctor said Tom was doing very well, although excitement would be bad for him; and then went out to pay some calls around, promising to call back in a few hours' time.

You may be sure he did not forget, with his kind heart, to call round at the Pringles, where he found little Lizzie listening anxiously for his approach, for he had promised her last night to come and give the news about Tom.

She eagerly thanked him for coming and

for his good news, and coyly gave the doctor permission to take back her love to Tom: of course, she was as much surprised as the doctor was to hear of Susan's disappearance, and her sympathies were quite aroused when he told her how broken the old lady seemed under the double trouble she was suffering under.

Lizzie immediately offered to go up and see her, not knowing her general disposition so well as our friend Æsculapius; but he told her that it would be useless, and that nothing could be done until the lawyer and the detective arrived from London. Lizzie was doubly anxious about Susan for Tom's sake: it is wonderful the interest that young ladies take in the sisters and other relatives of young gentlemen for whom they may entertain regard! But Lizzie could do nothing, and was even

more useless in the juncture than the dowager had at first supposed the governess to be when she offered to make herself useful.

After paying his round of calls, the doctor returned to The Poplars, some three hours or more from the time of his setting out: and he and the dowager then sat down in sympathy and mutual anxiety together in the parlour, for the first time in their respective lives, to wait for the return of Miss Kingscott from her mission to London.

Thus the hours passed by, the day after Susan Hartshorne's elopement.

CHAPTER IV.

MESSRS. TRUMP, SEQUENCE, AND CO.

Mrs. Hartshorne's lawyers had their offices in one of the most palatial and dingy of that, whilom palatial, and now most dingy, collection of houses, which it would be sheer lunacy to christen a street, yclept Bedford Row—that favourite abiding place and Mecca of the gentlemen of the "sheepskin" persuasion. The proprietress of The Poplars was

one of the richest clients of the firm, who had for years done business for the family before the dowager's incorporation in it; but still it does not follow that Messrs. Trump, Sequence, and Co. got over many fees and costs from that long-headed lady. She employed them as a matter of course, for they had all the Hartshorne papers, but they got very little money out of her, or from the estate, since Roger Hartshorne, the old squire, died.

It was to these gentlemen that Miss Kingscott was introduced on coming up to London to fulfil the mission with which she had been entrusted. It was good to see how the eyes of both partners glistened on hearing that, at last, some business was to be done for the Sussex dowager. Miss Kingscott related the particulars.

Mr. Trump at first was surprised, but being

of a keen, energetic turn of mind, he quickly determined how to act.

Having examined and cross-examined Miss Kingscott with regard to the dress and appearance of the girl, and so on—although he himself had frequently seen Susan too—he at once drew up the form of an advertisement for the lost girl, offering a reward of fifty pounds for her recovery.

He then rang his bell for one of the clerks in the outer office; and a grizzled old man, old but alert, with his hair standing on end, like a porcupine's quills, at once obeyed the summons.

"Here, Smiffens," said Mr. Trump, giving him the paper he had just written, "copy that advertisement; take down copies to the morning papers, and have it inserted at once. By the way," he added, as Smiffens

bustled out of the room, "take a copy, too, to the printers, and have five hundred hand-bills struck off for the police. Wait for them till they're done, and take them down to the central office. I'm just going down to Scotland Yard myself, and will tell them to expect the bills. Be sharp, mind! there's no time to lose."

As soon as the clerk had gone, Mr. Trump turned to the governess who had been waiting all this time.

"Now, I'm at your service, Miss Kingscott," he said. "I shall be happy to accompany you down to Hartwood if you are going back at once." Miss Kingscott signified that that was her intention. "You won't mind my stopping at the police-station, will you? I want to pick a sharp detective there, whom I know, and get him to go down with us."

"Oh, dear no!" said Miss Kingscott; and after a very trifling delay, Miss Kingscott, the lawyer, and John Bounce, special detective, of Scotland Yard, were in the coupé of a first-class carriage, and rattling down at express speed to Hartwood.

Arrived there, they managed to secure one of those extraordinary cabs or flys that are to be met with at country places, and which, I believe, are derelict London carriages that are thrown away by their former owners as worn out and useless: and after a short time they got to The Poplars, just as the doctor and the dowager, worn out with waiting, began to feel tired of the unusual pleasure of each other's company.

Matters having been explained over again, the detective, John Bounce, was set to work; and he, with that look of mystic preparation

which the craft glory in, asked at once to be shown over the house. He examined every hole and corner as if he thought Susan had been purposely stowed away by the members of the family. When he was satisfied with an inspection of the house and garden, giving especial care to examining the various locks and appurtenances of the gates, he appeared to think profoundly for a short time, when he asked to be shown the clothes which Susan had left behind her. These gave him immense gratification, for he turned them over and over again, giving vent to sundry Lord Burleigh's shakings of the head, and portentious "humphs," as if he had the whole thing in his mind's eye.

Detectives, my dear sir, or madam, are not by any means such sharp personages as writers of fiction generally love to depict.

There are some especially "cute" members of the force I don't for a moment deny; but as a class their knowledge and acquirements are fearfully exaggerated. Indeed, I must be so severe as to call them at once, humbugs; but they deceive themselves quite as greatly and as often as they deceive the public, and are by no means so sharp as the malefactors they are set to catch. I think a clergyman I once knew would have made a far better detective than a good many real *mouchoirs* I have come across. He had the gift of at once divining at the truth, investigating the morality and ethics of his parishioners which not one detective in a hundred possesses. They put on a great deal of mystery, and appear to "know all about it," but they are really much more shallow conjurers than Herr Frickell when, turning up

the sleeves of his coat and his snow-white wristbands and calling his audience's attention to the theory that there is "no preparation, gentlemen! no preparation," at once proceeds to smuggle eggs up his sleeves with a "Hi, Presto! Begone!"

The detective placed great emphasis on the fact that Susan had taken Miss Kingscott's dress and bonnet with her. "Putting two and two together," as he said, he delivered himself of the oracular assertion, that she "must have gone off somewhere," which, of course, no one else would have dreamt of but the dowager, who observed snappishly that she could have told him that before, and advised him to try and find out where the girl had gone to, as that was what he had been employed for. Whereupon, John Bounce appeared all at once to wake up to the notion

that he would have to go somewhere else to look for the missing girl. He asked if they had enquired about her at the nearest railway station, and was told they had; and on being further told that another station, Bigglethorpe, was also not far from The Poplars, he said she might have gone there, which was also perfectly feasible to the meanest comprehension.

At Bigglethorpe they found out that the station-master remembered a tall, dark gentleman getting out on the previous day, and coming back shortly afterwards with a lady. He thought it was the same, because now he remembered the gentleman had left his bag there, and had taken it, and gone off in the next up-train. On the detective's telling him to "Take care!" and mentioning that he was a policeman, which he generally found to have an awe-inspiring influence on the

gamins of London, the station-master said he could not tell him any more, not if he were "twenty detectives, and the Lord Mayor into the bargain, all rolled into one." He recollected a gentleman getting out there, he thought, and coming back again, and going up to London, and he believed he had a lady with him, but he would not be sure. It was "no use a pestering him with any more questions, for he had his own business to attend to about the traffic returns." He did not know who the gentleman was, nor the lady, and he "had not seen them afore or since, and didn't want to see 'em either, for that matter." There the enquiry ended, for the detective was at fault; and that is all they found out about Susan, after searching for days about the neighbourhood in every direction.

Nothing could be done now but to wait and see what effect the advertisements and handbills would have in discovering her whereabouts. So Mr. Trump and the detective had to go back to London as unsuccessful as when they had gone down; while Doctor Jolly and the old lady and Tom, who were all greatly grieved at the disappearance of the girl, could but wonder what had become of her. The only thing they had learnt for a certainty was that she was not in the county; and they could only hope that a good providence would watch over her, and bring her back to them safe: in the interim the police in the metropolis, with their wits sharpened by the reward offered, were doing all they could to ferret her out in London. And thus a month passed by.

During all this time, Messrs. Trump, Se-

quence, and Co. had been fairly worried out of their wits, day and night, with false reports about the finding of Susan. More than a hundred persons had come to their offices brimful of the intelligence that they had secured the fugitive, and had seen her at all sorts of unheard of places; but the persons whom they thought to be Susan turned out to be totally unlike her in every particular. Mr. Trump was for ever going with the police to inspect the bodies of drowned persons; and yet no trace was found of the missing girl, and he at last began to hope devoutly that she would be found soon, whether dead or alive he did not care which, for he was bothered to death about the matter. Indeed, he would have cheerfully given a handsome sum to have "washed his hands," as he often said to Sequence, who had a peculiar, parrot-like

habit of repeating Trump's words after him, as if affirmatively, "of the whole affair." To which Sequence would nod his head, and respond sagaciously, "Certainly, of the whole affair."

When Markworth, therefore, after the search had lasted a month, walked into the office one morning just after his interview with the Jew, Solomonson, and told Mr. Trump, who had accosted him graciously, thinking he was a new client, that he came about the advertisement for the lost girl, Mr. Trump was wroth and slightly snappy.

"I hope to goodness you've really found her, and not come here with any cock and bull story like the rest of 'em."

"I think you'll find," said Markworth, taking out the marriage certificate which he had brought with him, the advertisement,

and a photographic likeness which he had had taken at Havre, "when you look at these, that I've found the girl, and am entitled to the reward you have offered."

"This is Susan, sure enough; but," he observed, "where's it taken? Havre? Havre? How the devil did she get there?"

"*I* took her there," answered Markworth, in the most cool and collected manner, according to his wont; "and if you'll look at this certificate here you'll see that I had a perfect right to do so. She is my wife!"

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Trump, through his closed teeth. "Your wife! Why, the girl's insane!"

"That's where you make the mistake, my dear sir! She's no more insane than you are. Her people ought to have told you that, for although she had been previously a little

'foolish,' perhaps, they saw her improvement of late; and she had the sense, at all events, to run away with me and get married, and that's no proof of her insanity."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Trump, "I don't know about that. I remember now, the old doctor said that she had been more intelligent before she disappeared, but he did not tell me that Susan Hartshorne was quite right in her mind, and I won't believe it. Do you know Mr. ——, I beg your pardon, I did not catch your name."

"Markworth, Allynne Markworth," said that gentleman.

"Thank you! Well then, Mr. Allynne Markworth, do you know that that girl has a large fortune, and it is a very serious offence in the eyes of the law to abduct, and enter

into a false contract of marriage with a girl of feeble intellect like that?"

"I am perfectly aware of the facts as you state them, my dear sir. Allow me to congratulate you on your legal presence of mind and abilities," said Markworth, as calmly as ever. "I knew she had a fortune, but you will have to prove she was *non compos mentis*, I believe that's your term for it, when I married her. The girl was of age, my dear sir. Look at that marriage certificate, and see for yourself. She was of legal age on the very day before we were married. There! you see the date of the certificate, 28th August, 1867."

"Well, well, whether she was of age or not you can be prosecuted under an indictment for a conspiracy to obtain the money of a

person of unsound mind, under the pretence of going through a marriage ceremony with a person who, in the eye of the law, could not make a binding contract!"

"Precisely, my dear sir!" said the other, coolly, Mr. Sequence, of course, taking no part in the conversation. "Precisely, but you see you will have to prove, in the first place, that the girl was of unsound mind; and in the second, to prove conspiracy you will have to implicate two or more persons. You see, I too, know the law, Mr. Trump: allow me to inform you that I alone was concerned in the affair, how will you prove your conspiracy?"

The lawyer looked fairly baffled. "The girl's found at all events, and that's one trouble saved," he said to himself.

Markwork resumed after a moment's pause, "You see, my dear sir, the girl was of age,

she was unhappy at home, she ran away with me and married me: the whole thing lies in a nutshell. I wasn't to blame; and, of course, as she has property, I shall take very good care to assert my rights as her husband. But that's an after consideration. You are quite satisfied that the girl is found, I suppose?" said Markworth, after detailing how Susan had met him on the day of her disappearance, taken train with him at Bigglethorpe Station (corroborated as the lawyer remembered, by his and the detective's enquiries on the day they went down to Hartwood), from whence they had come up to London, and then gone to Havre. The marriage certificate and photograph were also convincing proofs of his statement.

"Yes," said Mr. Trump, "I suppose you have the girl; but it's a very queer case."

"My address is *Numero Sept, Rue Mont-*

martre, Havre, where you can see Mrs. Markworth yourself: now I'll thank you to hand over that fifty pounds you offered as a reward for any information about her."

"By George!" said the lawyer, "you're a cool hand, and no mistake!" He could not gainsay Markworth's statement, however; so, unlocking his cash box, and taking out five ten pound notes, he handed them to him reluctantly. "There they are, and much good may they do you!" said Mr. Trump, ruefully—He felt just as if he had been the victim of a practical joke.

Markworth, after counting them over carefully, pocketted the notes with the utmost *sang froid*. "I suppose you will inform Mrs. Hartshorne of her daughter's marriage?"

"Of course, sir, of course! I shall make it my business to go down there myself at once."

"Aye, do, my dear sir! and get all those unpleasant details over. I'm myself going down to-morrow, and should not like to be bothered in having to make any explanation."

"You'll get as much as you want," said Mr. Trump, significantly, "when you come across the old lady." And Mr. Trump bethought him, with ill-concealed satisfaction, of the reception with which Markworth would probably meet; it would be a sort of tit-for-tat, or *quid pro quo*, for the "sell" he had just been made a victim of, in having to hand over that fifty pounds to the very man who had caused all the worry of Susan's disappearance. "You won't get any money out of her," he thought.

"I shall instruct my solicitors," said Markworth, as he turned to leave the room, after making the first move of his game of chess,

"to substantiate my marriage, which can be easily done, and claim my wife's fortune."

"You had better," said Mr. Trump, savagely; "you won't get it, my dear sir, without a fight, I can tell you!"

"Ha—um! we will see," said Markworth, putting on his hat. "Good morning, gentlemen—good morning!" and he went out.

"Morning!" grunted Mr. Trump, feeling as if he had undergone a defeat; and "Morning," echoed Mr. Sequence, who had been listening carefully all the time, without putting in a word. He had the whole conversation, however, stored up in his brain for the future use of the firm.

CHAPTER V.

CONVALESCENT.

At the commencement of the fifth chapter of the veracious history of the Knight of La Mancha, it is related that "Don Quixote perceiving that he was not able to stir, resolved to have recourse to his signal remedy, which was to bethink himself what passage in his books might afford him comfort; and presently this fully brought to his remembrance

that story of Baldwin and the Marquis of Mantua, when Charlotte left the former wounded on the mountain: a story learned and known by little children,"—as the author proceeds to comment,—"not unknown to young men and women, celebrated and even received by the old, and yet not a jot more authentic than the miracles of Mahomet."

In a similar way did our wounded hero, Master Tom, hasten his recovery by thinking over all the charming little love passages which had occurred between Miss Lizzie and himself; consequently in a few weeks, thanks to Cupid's recollections and the aid of pharmacy, our hero was nearly on his legs again.

The broken—"smashed" the doctor called them—ribs had been steadily improving, in spite of all the anxiety Tom suffered on his sister's account, sanguine though he was of

her yet being brought home; and by the time that Markworth divulged his plot, and Mr. Trump hastened down to The Poplars to communicate it, Master Tom had progressed his cure as rapidly as did Don Quixote, being able to leave his bed and hobble about a bit before being declared by Doctor Jolly to be quite convalescent and out of his hands. The young squire had, however, youth and health to back him up, which enabled the "signal remedy," perhaps, to have more effect on him than it had on Sancho Panza's master.

The interest which the invalid Tom had created, had somewhat deadened the effect of Susan's disappearance; and although that was as yet an unsolved secret, and the cause of much anxiety, still everyone, both in and out of the household, celebrated it as a day

of rejoicing when Tom made his first reappearance down stairs. The young Antinous had undergone the scars and strife of battle: it was meet that his recovery should be made much of, as indeed was the case.

Tom came down stairs, and all were glad to see him: even the dowager allowed a frigid smile of welcome to flit across her features as he entered the dining-room once more; and "Garge," whom he met in the passage, exclaimed, with his customary "ploughishness"—

"Lor' sakes, Measter Tummus! I are roight glad to say un!"

Miss Kingscott expressed her welcome by far too warmly, the old lady thought, for she advanced eagerly and squeezed the hand Tom offered, after curtseying low. Doctor

Jolly was pleased to be present also on the occasion.

"Bless my soul, Tom!" he said. "Here we are, as right again as ninepence, my boy; I told you so, Mrs. Hartshorne—I told you so," as if that lady were disputing the point. She was too glad to see Tom, however, to argue with the doctor as usual, but yielded the point gracefully, only throwing cold water on the ecstacies of our friend Damon, by suggesting that Tom's youth and constitution had pulled him through better perhaps than all the physic and meddling doctors in the world. Doctor Jolly, however, could also afford to be lenient; so he left the dowager's challenge unanswered.

After a day or two, Tom hobbled out

into the garden. He was still very weak and pale, but improving; and as soon as he had tried his powers at hobbling outside the front door, he determined to hobble down to the parsonage. "It was only right, you know, after all their kind enquiries every day about his health!" The Pringles had sent up every morning an extraordinary looking young female servant of theirs, whom the dowager christened "the Gezaba," to ask how "Mister Tom was getting on." Naturally Tom could do no less than return his thanks for such an attention: it could be no other motive that would take him out down to the parsonage so soon after he was able to stir—nothing else, of course!

Accordingly, Tom sallied out a day or two after he had come down stairs, telling no one of his venture, for they would all have been

up in arms at his walking so far so soon after his illness.

It was now a month past the era of the pic-nic—a month remarkable for much besides his accident, and Tom had many things to think of, not the least of which was the recollection of what he had said to Lizzie, and she to him, just after he had been wounded. Doctor Jolly had acted as a sort of go-between to them, having carried many a little message twixt The Poplars and the parsonage, after Tom had been placed *hors de combat.* Kind hearted old Doctor Jolly—his is the truest and most pleasant face on these pages!

Tom remembered that walk of his for many a day afterwards. How he had paused at that corner to take breath, and rested on this stile here to recover his faintness; and

how he thought he would never be able to reach his destination, until he saw the square old tower of the church and the trim built parsonage beyond. But he got over the ground heavily, hobbling along by the aid of his stick, and receiving hearty greetings of "Foine day, sir!" from the fat farmers, who rejoiced to see the "yoong squoire" about again.

The parsonage never looked prettier, he thought, as he got to the gate at last, and Tom rolled over in his mind what he should say to Lizzie, and if she would be glad to see him, and whether he should see her at all.

His doubts were, however, soon solved. The "Gezaba of a servant" who opened the door and bungled out a sort of greeting to him, told him that both "Miss Lizzie and the

master" were in. Tom could have dispensed with Pringle's presence, but he had to make the best of a bad bargain.

As he entered the little drawing-room, which he knew so well, Pringle stepped forward gladly to meet him, while Lizzie remained shyly in the background.

"By Jove! Tom"—they had long since dropped surnames between them, as men do after a little intimacy—"I'm right glad to see you, old fellow! But we heard that you only got out of bed the day before yesterday, so we hardly expected you to come over yet. How are you, old fellow, eh?" and he shook Tom eagerly by the hand.

"Oh, I'm all right," answered our hero, after which he gave Lizzie's hand a very hard squeeze, which caused that young lady to blush furiously, but in a moment the flush of excite-

ment passed off Tom's face, and he looked as pale as death; if he had not caught hold of the back of a chair he would have dropped down. The walk had certainly been too much for him.

"Oh! Herbert," exclaimed Lizzie, in alarm, "he's going to faint!" and she ran forward to Tom, who, I believe, would have cheerfully fainted at the juncture, if he could possibly have achieved it; you see, the circumstances were very favourable to the occasion.

As it was, the "gay young dog," as Doctor Jolly would have said, was "in precious nice quarters," for there he was in a moment, by the aid of Pringle's arm, laid out on the comfortable sofa, with Lizzie bathing his forehead with *eau de Cologne*, and handing him smelling salts, and Pringle enquiring every mo-

ment, "Do you feel better now, eh, old fellow?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir!" said Lizzie, as she bent over him with her face suffused with a carnation tinge whenever she caught his eye, which the artful rogue contrived should happen very frequently—"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir! walking out so soon, and you deserve a good punishing."

And Miss Lizzie looked very stern, indeed, with her violet eyes beaming with a rich warm light: she seemed as if she would punish Master Tom very severely.

"Yes, it's very wrong," answered the recumbent hero; "but you see, I could not help it, you know!" and Miss Lizzie blushed again, as Tom looked very meaningly at her.

"Better now, old fellow?" put in Pringle, at this juncture. "That's right: you don't look so pale now. By Jove! I thought you were going to faint."

"Bless you! I'll be right in a twinkle," answered Tom. "You see, the walk was a trifle too much; but I feel decidedly better now," with a look at the young lady's eyes to invigorate himself anew: the violet eyes seemed to act as a sort of tonic.

"You shall be condemned to lie on the sofa all the afternoon, sir!" said Lizzie, "as a punishment for your imprudence!"

"All right," laughed Tom, "I'll stop for ever—that is if you'll let me; but what will your brother say?" he asked, with a roguish glance.

"Oh! certainly—certainly," said Pringle, hurriedly; he was very much puzzled how to

act. It looked very much like a flirtation between his sister and Tom, under his very nose as it were, and he had promised Lady Inskip to "put a stop to it." He did not know what to do. He liked Tom, and did not wish besides to appear uncourteous; but he was very nervous. "If I were only her mother," he murmured to himself, "it would be easy enough;" but as he unfortunately did not occupy the position of a maternal relative, he was on thorns all the time Tom stayed.

"Don't you think we'd better have some lunch, Lizzie," he said, after a pause, filled up by the other two very agreeably by the aid of that very intelligible "conversation without words"—which by the aid of looks is carried on between lovers, whether *de facto* or *de jure*. Whereupon Lizzie bustled out of the room, shaking a little bunch of keys in

the most housewifely manner, and looking dangerously pretty; presently returning with the "Gezaba" in her train, and carrying a little damask covered luncheon tray. The three had a very sociable and pleasant little meal, although neither Tom nor Lizzie eat much; however, they both drank deeply—intoxicating draughts from each other's eyes.

Presently, Tom rose to go, after paying a call of some hours' duration, during which Pringle had never given him an opportunity of being alone with Lizzie. "What cubs brothers are!" thought Tom in his inmost heart, but he thanked Pringle aloud for his kindness in sending up every day to enquire after him. Pringle was candid with all his faults. "Oh, you must thank Lizzie for that," he said; "I've called several times myself to

ask about you, but she sent up the servant, I believe, every day!"

And then, of course, Master Tom had to thank Miss Lizzie. Why the thanking had to occupy such a long time, and why Lizzie had to blush so much, and why Master Tom had to keep her hand such an unconscionable long time in his, while Pringle went forward to open the door, and show his guest out; and why Tom had to make the little attention into a serious business by saying, "I shall never forget it! never, as long as I live," I can't explain—sufficient to say that Master Tom appeared very much satisfied at leaving her, though he had not had the chance of actually telling his love, while Miss Lizzie did not appear as if she would "punish" him, as she threatened to do, when he called again.

The young incumbent walked home with Tom, to give him the benefit of his arm; and he was very uncomfortable about it all, for he could not ask a poor, sick fellow like that who was hobbling by his side, "what were his intentions." He must let matters rest for a season, until something actually turned up. He was distrustful of the whole business, for he did not think the rich and purse-proud old dowager would consent to let her son wed her curate's portionless sister; so Pringle felt worried in his heart, and, after seeing Tom home, had to go and call on Lady Inskip in order to be comforted by the languid Laura.

When Tom got to The Poplars, he found that a great deal had happened in his absence.

Mr. Trump had come down post haste to tell about Susan's recovery, and how Mark-

worth had taken her away and married her, and that she was with him now at Havre. The lawyer was still waiting to see him. Doctor Jolly too was there, and had heard the news, our old friend telling Tom as he hobbled into the hall, "Bless my soul! sir, there's the very devil to pay!"

CHAPTER VI.

STORMY! GLASS RISING.

Barometers are of such use to maritime and other folk, in indicating the changes of atmospherical phenomena, and the approach of disturbing elements, that it is a wonder in these go-a-head days, no instrument has been constructed by which we could ascertain the fluctuations of the human temperament. One might have a sort

of graduated thermometer, *par exemple*, to indicate the rise and force of the passions, especially that of anger, and call it a "cholerometer." The idea may be recommended to the attention of scientific philanthropists, as it would be of incalculable use in preventing unruly encounters, if one but just knew the exact choleric and argumentative calibre and equipoise of those with whom one has frequently to come in contact.

If such an instrument did exist, the barometrical measurement applied to the old dowager, Mrs. Hartshorne's temper on the morning that Markworth came to have his interview, and state his case about Susan, would certainly have indicated some such stormy height, or fall, as 29° 31, or thereabouts!

Mr. Trump had gone down expressly the

previous day, as he said he would; and a nice storm he created. "Not a tempest in a teapot," but a regular carousal of the elements —a rushing together of hot and cold streams, not of air, as is so eloquently described in the pages of Professor Maury, but of temper and passion.

"Stuff and nonsense," said the dowager, virulently, "I won't believe it! Do you mean to say that that man, who was stopping here in the house with us as Thomas' friend, and accepted our hospitality, took advantage of our kindness, and ran off with that idiot girl; why, it's absurd! Stuff and nonsense, I tell you. I won't believe it!"

"But, my dear madam," interposed Mr. Trump, "I assure you it is a fact. We've got the proof, and I have just told you all the circumstances. It's as clear as a counsellor's

wig, madam! He took the girl away from here, married her, and there she is; nothing could be plainer."

"Gammon!" said the dowager. "It is all rubbish!"

"My dear madam," said the lawyer, "just be sensible for a moment."

"I've got more sense in my little finger, sir, than you have in your whole body," snapped out the old lady.

"Granted, my dear madam; but, pardon me, if that is not exactly relevant to the case. The proof is clear enough that Markworth took her away; and I sent my clerk down to the church mentioned in the certificate, and there is no doubt that he married Susan there, and that she's now at Havre. Besides, his motive is plain enough; he wanted to get her fortune."

"The artful, designing scoundrel!" broke out the dowager.

"The question is, my dear madam, what is to be done now? That fellow said he was coming down here to-morrow morning. Would it be better to wait until you see him, and fathom his plans, or else send over to Havre at once, and take steps to recover the girl?"

"The cunning, crawling villain!" ejaculated Mrs. Hartshorne; "but I'll be even with him yet, I'll be even with him!"

"I am quite at your disposal," promptly replied the lawyer, who was eager to be bounding after Markworth; and just at this moment, before anything had been decided upon, Doctor Jolly was announced.

He apologised for interrupting the conversation; but said, that as he had heard

that Mr. Trump had just come down, he thought there would be some tidings of Susan, which must be his excuse for walking in so unceremoniously.

Whereupon, both the dowager and the lawyer together fired out upon him with the astonishing news. "Bless my soul!" exclaimed he, horrified at what he heard. "Who would have thought it? But I always said he was a bad fellow! I told you so Mrs. Hartshorne, I told you so!"

"And much good there was in your telling! If you hadn't been always dangling here, taking that governess off from her duties, and had looked after Susan better yourself, this would never have happened."

"Bless my soul! madam," exclaimed the doctor, staring helplessly at Mr. Trump, aghast at the blame being thus thrown on

him of all others; and dabbing his face in perplexity with his yellow bandana pocket handkerchief. "Bless my soul, madam! What have *I* got to do with it?"

Tom at this moment came hobbling up the front steps, and the doctor, eagerly seizing the opportunity to escape from the dowager's invective, went out of the room hastily to open the door for him, when he took the opportunity of telling Tom, as we have already heard, that there was "the devil to pay in there," pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to the room he had just quitted, in the most significant manner.

The tale had, of course, to be told over again to Tom, when he was admitted to the council, now of four; and an animated debate ensued on what was to be done. It was finally resolved that the lawyer should tele-

graph to London, and send over one of his clerks that night to Havre, to watch the house where Susan was, and see that she was not removed in the interim; that Mr. Trump was to remain at The Poplars until after Markworth's visit on the morrow; and, at his express wish, Tom was to go over as soon afterwards as possible, and fetch Susan back himself.

After a good deal of fluctuation, from 29° 31′ down to so low a fall as 28° 64′, the barometrical pressure of the dowager's temper had returned to its abnormal state, during the excited conversation that had gone on all the time; but the next morning, however, when Markworth made his appearance, the dowager's barometer sank again to a very low depth indeed.

Although he was opposed to three people

at once—the old lady, Tom, and Mr. Trump, the former of whom piled Pelion on Ossa in her wrath, Markworth kept his temper admirably. He seemed to pride himself on the successful issue of his scheme, and related each step he had taken with an air of ill-concealed triumph. The dowager was furious, but her hot-tempered words appeared to have little or no effect on the man who now proclaimed himself the husband of her daughter, a neglect of which daughter by herself and her cruelty, he stated, led to his success. Rages are all very well in their way, but the dowager's anger was powerless here, so Markworth bore off the palm of victory against the triple odds against which he had contested it.

The only time that he appeared to be affected by all that was said against him, was

when Tom addressed him pointedly and coldly with the stern truth, which he could not dispute. He then turned pale.

"You have done a dishonourable action, sir," said Tom. "I treated you and trusted you as a gentleman and a friend, and you have abused that trust. I—I never thought you would have acted like it; and, apart from the injury you have done us, I am sorry for it, for you have hurt my faith in a man's honour."

Tom really felt it thus.

"I can't excuse myself," answered Markworth, "but I have done good to your sister instead of harm. I have brought her back to her reason, instead of letting her remain a hopeless idiot, as she would have done if I had not drawn her out; and I'll say this, it was not all for the sake of her money I did

it. I was really, so help me heaven! interested in her case, and trusted to cure her honestly."

"You need not swear any more false oaths to me," answered Tom; "I don't desire to speak to you again, or see you again as long as I live."

"Very well," said Markworth, "so be it. But all I have to say is this, that if you wish to take back your sister you are free to do so; if she likes to go, I will not prevent her. As for you, madam," he said, turning politely to Mrs. Hartshorne, and bowing, "I have placed the matter in the hands of my solicitor, for I am determined to get the fortune to which my wife is entitled."

"You'll not get a penny, rogue," retorted the dowager (barometer 28° 64″!) "not if there's any law in the land."

"We will see, madam."

"Hark you, sir," said Mr. Trump, having his say, of which he had been sadly deprived all the time the dowager was going on. "Hark you, sir, we can find the girl was of unsound mind, as I told you before, and have you indicted for a conspiracy."

"That we will!" echoed the dowager, "and have you on the treadmill, villain!"

Mrs. Hartshorne had somewhat vague notions of the power of that large word in capitals—LAW, and seemed to think that its obvious bent in any case, especially one like the present, was the treadmill.

"We will see," answered Markworth, defiantly; "but you will have to prove your case, my dear sir. You see I did it all by myself, and the girl was a willing agent, and of age: she is of perfectly sound mind,

as she can prove in the witness box, and how you are to get over all that evidence remains to be proved."

"We'll prove it," answered Mr. Trump; but although he was certainly cross, his countenance did not exhibit any strong hopes of success. "The cunning vagabond is too much for us," he murmured, *sotto voce*.

"Good morning," said Markworth, blandly, to all, and he walked out triumphantly, the dowager screaming after him, "Not a penny will you get, scoundrel."

In Markworth's confession he had very naturally, for his own sake, not brought up the governess's name; consequently she was excluded from all share in the conspiracy. She knew of his being down, however, and had gone out apparently for a walk while the battle was being fought in the dining-room.

She wished to meet Markworth alone, and he was equally desirous to see her; so it is not surpising that a few minutes after taking such a stagey farewell of the dowager, the two met beyond the precincts of The Poplars.

"Just the person I wanted to see," ejaculated Markworth, on coming up with her under the shadow of the wall, which encircled the Hartshorne mansion.

"Indeed! I did not think you would be so glad to see me," replied Miss Kingscott.

"Indeed I am, Clara; I wished to settle up with you. I have married the girl, and the thing's regularly *en train* now. I have only got to get the money."

"That's just what I wanted."

"Well, I've got it for you."

"Really?" exclaimed the governess, surprised; she had never thought that Mark-

worth would have kept to his compact once he had got the girl off. But he was "careful about little things," as he had told Tom when he first came down to The Poplars, and he was not going to incur Clara Kingscott's hostility by breaking his agreement, even when there was nothing to force him to keep it.

"Yes, really," he answered; "here's the other hundred I promised you, so you and I are quits, Clara."

"Thank you," she said, turning over the notes in astonishment in her hand; "I never expected you to pay me."

"Did you not. I always keep my bargains."

"Do you," she replied. "You have not always done so."

"Let bygones be bygones, Clara; I promised you the money, and I have paid you now, and you cannot complain."

"It is the first time you ever recollected what you owed me," said the governess, bitterly.

"Don't say that, Clara; let us be good friends. Our compact is now finished, and we need not rake up the past. If there is anything more I can do for you, Clara, let me know; and if it's in my power, I'll do it," said Markworth, magnanimously, for he thought the woman had still a lingering regard for him.

"I don't want anything from you, Allynne Markworth," she said, angrily stamping her foot; "and I don't wish to see you again. You've been the curse of my life! But all's

not over yet between us!" she muttered, significantly, as she turned on her heel and walked back towards the house.

Markworth looked after her a moment, and then resumed his way down to the railway station, *en route* for London. He had a good deal to do before starting for Havre, and wanted to get there before Tom or anyone else went over after Susan.

"That's the way with them all!" he said, to himself, as he walked away rapidly in quick strides. "They get all they can, and then wash their hands of you!"

But he made a great mistake. Miss Kingscott had not by any means washed her hands of Markworth yet. She had gathered a good deal from the conversation between Mr. Trump and the dowager on the previous day, to which she had listened attentively through

the keyhole of the next room, and she knew that she could not only upset Markworth's plans for obtaining Susan's inheritance, but perhaps, also, get him imprisoned, if she exposed her share in the affair.

This she intended to do, but not until the last moment, just when she should think fit; and at present she would remain at The Poplars, and go on as if she knew nothing of the great event. She mig ht captivate Tom in the meantime, she thought; and, at all events, she as yet had the doctor to fall back upon. Æsculapius had been twice as devoted to her since she displayed so much energy in trying to get Susan back. He had muttered to himself, over and over again, as he rode up to The Poplars, in his daily visits to Tom, "She is a dooced fine girl; and a clever girl, too, by Gad!" and, no doubt, would have re-

peated that declaration of his which the campaigner's call had nipped in the bud, if the opportunity had only favoured him. But it had not, for the dowager seemed adverse to letting the doctor remain a moment alone with the governess.

When Markworth had gone away, the council between Mrs. Hartshorne, and Tom, and the lawyer, was resumed; Tom said that he would go the next day if he was able and fetch back Susan. As for the money matters, the old lady declared she would spare no expense to "cheat that scoundrel" out of his plunder; and Mr. Trump was authorised to go to every end to defeat the suit of Markworth *versus* Hartshorne, which the schemer had stated would be at once commenced, the old lady refusing to surrender her daughter's fortune unless she were

compelled to do so. And she "wouldn't even do it then," she declared.

While they were debating over the matter, Miss Kingscott came in quietly and went up to her room—nobody knowing what a strong witness she would prove on the side of the defendants in the case, if she so willed it: she now revolved in her mind whether she would or would not act in the matter. It was as yet unsettled, although she had sworn to revenge herself on Markworth. His last words to her had somewhat disarmed her.

Nemesis or *non* Nemesis: that was the question. The former triumphed. Mr. Trump went back to London; and there he found that the case of Markworth *versus* Hartshorne, was already "brewing in the storm," although it remained to be proved whether it was going to be "nipped in the

bud," as the American stump speaker told his audience after he had informed them that he "smelt a rat." With which metaphor the chapter had better be concluded.

Barometer "Fair" again!

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAMPAIGNER "CARRIES THE FORTRESS."

LIKE a lamb to the slaughter, Herbert Pringle was led by the wily campaigner to his doom matrimonial.

When the veteran perceived that all her operations *in re* Tom and the gushing Carry must for a time be postponed, on account of the prostration of the principal combatant, she determined to prosecute the other enterprise to

the best of her ability, and declared a sort of *guerre a l'outrance* against the young incumbent for the sake of her eldest daughter, the charming Laura.

Of course, she was far too strategic a campaigner to neglect the other affair altogether. She had written Tom an elegant little *billet-doux* after the sad contretemps of the pic-nic, telling how sorry she was for his accident, and how she had punished Mortimer, "that naughty, naughty boy," and would remember the painful scene "to her grave:" she also caused Carry to scribble a postcript expressing her condolence, besides sending every day, like the Pringles, to enquire how he did. But she could do nothing further there at present, not at all events until Tom was able to come out again, when she had no doubt she would secure him, and oust that

"odious little minx," in spite of what she had seen at the pic-nic. She would, indeed, have said more about the matter, only that she would not for the world offend that "dear Mr. Pringle," who was "such a love of a preacher," and "a perfect gentleman," which she would persist in telling everyone, as if they disputed the point in the first place, and in the second, as if it was the most extraordinary thing in the world to meet with a member of the cloth who was a gentleman! The surprise on the campaigner's part as to his being a good preacher was, however, perfectly natural: it is not every gentleman that wears a cassock who is either a fair orator, has a passable delivery, or preaches a good sermon.

Men who go into the church appear sadly ignorant of the old Latin proverb, *Poeta nascitur non fit!* They ascribe unto them-

selves two gifts which they believe that they possess, the gift of literary composition, and the gift of oratory; neither of which one man in a hundred, perhaps, possesses separately, and not one in ten thousand, together! And yet the generality of clergymen seem to think that they can not only write a good sermon, but preach it also; hence these dismal, dreary platitudes, and over-and-over-again schoolboy-themes or truisms which set most of us to sleep every Sunday in the family pew. The short homily of the early clericals was far better than the prosy sermon, of unconscionable length, delivered by the moderns; all of whom seem to think that they were born and brought up, and mercifully ordained to be popular preachers, and nothing else!

The war waged by the campaigner against the young incumbent of Hartwood church

was not one of guns of precision and bloodshed. It was a very rosy sort of campaign, all rose-coloured, fought with honied words and sugar plums, and meant to end in orange blossoms and marriage settlements; only a lawsuit in which the conflicting parties and ends were the languid Laura, and an establishment, *versus* the celibacy of Herbert Pringle, B.A., Oxon.

Everything favoured the campaigner's manœuvres. You see, she had the field clear to herself. The bait she offered was very tempting, and summer in the country is a most dangerous time for young, unmarried men. A week in rural retreats will sometimes do more in the Hymeneal line than weeks of London fashionable life: Cœlebs who laughs the hook to scorn, however so delicately baited in town, may be hooked at

once with a gaudy May-fly down in the country. Besides, the Reverend Herbert was by no means averse to be caught. He, with all his Oxford experiences, must have to some extent perceived the motives Lady Inskip had for so pressingly cultivating his society; but he did not seek cover as the poor, hunted fox so artfully does. He really found the languid Laura too bewitching to be resisted; so, with hardly a coy make-believe of alarm at what he was doing, he eagerly swallowed the bait, hook and all.

Ever since the pic-nic, Herbert Pringle had become the devoted cavalier of Lady Inskip's eldest daughter.

Morning, noon, and night, the little dapple-grey animal which the young incumbent bestrode was to be seen tied up to the gate-posts of Laburnum Cottage: substantial proof

that Pringle was within. Of course this was during the intervals of parochial duties which were by no means heavy, as Hartwood, and Bigton too, for that matter, had no poor to speak of, the population being agricultural, living well on their weekly wage, and inhabiting comfortable looking stone houses with pleasant flower gardens in front, and vegetable compounds in the rear.

Croquet—that pleasantly flirtative game, which demands so little skill or exertion, and affords such rare opportunities for effective *poses*, and desultory chit-chat—was all the rage on the little lawn in front of the Inskip's cottage, during the warm September days: croquet settled the young incumbent's business.

Laura was afforded such nice little openings here for developing her conquest in an

easy manner so suited to her nature, that she entered with some spirit in completing what the campaigner's manœuvres had begun. She had only to look graceful, and move about imperially, as tall women can well do, and show her exquisite profile—it looked better than her full face: by such means the mischief was done.

Pringle, like most little men, had a fancy for graceful Junos, and here he had one ready-made to his hand. Out of the pulpit he was not much of an orator; but as the languid Laura hardly ever uttered anything but an occasional interjection, they suited each other admirably. Nothing was wanting but the final declaration, and that came quite as soon as the old campaigner had planned. Two or three weeks completed the conquest, thanks to country air and scene, statuesque

charms and croquet, and the praiseworthy efforts of the skilful old veteran who had charge of the campaign.

People speak a great deal, in the press and elsewhere, of the insufficiency of public rewards and honours for distinguished services with a good deal of truth; but in all these discussions a large and praiseworthy portion of the community is entirely neglected, and its claims to honour and reward absolutely ignored. I allude to the mothers of families; how do they get their services recognised? We bind the hero's brows with laurels; we raise the brilliant party orator to the peerage; we give the eminent professor of the law a seat on the woolsack; the soldier a medal and a bit of ribbon for his wounds in the country's service; and we dub the worshipful alderman a knight, should he happen to

be at the royal kitchen steps when a prince is born, or have invited the Grand Elector of Sauer Kraut to partake of a ham sandwich on his landing at Dover *en route* to visit the Palace; but the talented and skilful diplomatist—the mother of a family, who marries off her marriageable daughters all to the most eligible of *partis*, passes by unnoticed. She, who fights courageously a losing game, against fearful odds, who braves reproach, continually—nay, even disgrace, sometimes in furthering a praiseworthy object, and who deserves our esteem and recognition, gets no reward. Peerages in plenty for parliamentarians, titles for sycophants, knighthoods for toad eaters—but the campaigners go by without ne'er so much as a ribbon of decoration.

This should not be. In the time honoured

cause of woman's rights, this neglect must be protested against. Let us reward our royal plate cleaners and caustic partisans as much as the nation pleases, but think also of the noble women of England, and their fortune and husband-hunting claims!

Lady Inskip was one of the most skilled and to be honoured of her class. Not only did she lead Pringle up to the point—but, knowing his nervousness, she also saved him the trouble of coming to a declaration. She did it for him herself, and this is how it happened.

She could be very confidential, you know, and was well fitted to assume the maternal *rôle*, and talk "as a mother myself," whenever it was required of her. She had once before done so to Pringle on Lizzie's account, as was mentioned in a former chapter; so

nothing was more easy and graceful than to assume the same *rôle* now in his own interests while talking to himself. She determined to make the proposal for him, as he was too shy to make it himself; although in so doing, she spoilt considerable hopes of fun at the "fast" Carry's part, who had declared over and over again in the family circle that she "would give worlds to see the mild parson pop," provoking a mild "how can you be so absurd, Carry!" from Laura, who yet could not prevent a feeble smile at the possibility of such a *tableau*, and "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, miss!" from her mother; while the young imp, Sir Mortimer, gave vent to a triumphant war whoop, and declared that it would be "awful larks! to see Pringle on his knees!" The darling, naughty boy, to be sure!

When the campaigner perceived from sundry unmistakable symptoms that things had been brought to a crisis, she prepared to act.

One day, after Pringle had been more bashful and nervous than ever, although still very attentive to Laura, when there had been some weeks of intercourse between the pair since the first descent on Bigton, Lady Inskip "button-holed" him as he was on his way out, and instead of letting him mount his pony at the gate, entreated him to walk a bit down the road with her, as she had something important to say. Pringle, more bashfully still, assented, and passing the bridle of the dapple grey through his arm, he and the campaigner sauntered off in close confab, watched from the windows of Laburnum Cottage by the young ladies and Mortimer,

who seriously wondered what was "up"—one must use slang sometimes; it is so expressive in these very slangy days.

"My dear Mr. Pringle," began the wily campaigner, "I take a great interest in you, in quite a motherly way, indeed; and you will excuse me speaking on a very delicate matter to you?"

"Oh! certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly—anything you know," he stammered, in reply, blushing a rosy red, even beneath his budding whiskers of auburn hue.

"Well, then, my dear Mr. Pringle, I have to speak to you about Laura. I am her mother, and it seems strange in me to speak to you; but I look upon you as a son, and I wish I could see things arranged between you. The darling girl is getting quite thin

and pale, and this prolonged suspense is more than she can bear. And I must ask you in the most—that is—my dear Mr. Pringle, I think your feelings are interested, and—"

"Precisely so, Lady Inskip; just what I wanted to say, only I could not say it. Would Laura, eh?—your daughter, do you think, eh?" and he looked nervously into the campaigner's face.

"I think she will consent. I am so glad, my dear young friend; I will speak to her for you, and it will be all arranged, if you will come in again this evening. I have long wished to see my angel Laura married to a Christian gentleman, and since I have known you, you have fulfilled everything which I could have hoped for her to find in a hus-

band"—that he had, with regard to position and competency, besides being easily managed—"and, my dear Mr. Pringle, I will tell Laura at once; and this is the happiest moment in my life!"

"Certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly!" stammered the young incumbent, as he shook hands joyfully with his future mother-in-law; and in the evening he came round again to Laburnum Cottage. Laura received him with a faint blush and a timid pressure of his hand, so it was an understood thing that they were regularly engaged.

After it was all settled, Pringle lost a good deal of his prior bashfulness; and both Carry and young Sir Mortimer regarded him as a very jolly sort of brother-in-law to have. The wedding was fixed for an early date in

the following year, after a probationary engagement of some three months.

Eureka! The campaigner had carried the fortress after a series of admirable military tactics.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUSAN.

CHANGE of scene is one of the most potent panaceas for mental ills; and change of scene had in a few week effected Susan's complete recovery. She had been under Markworth's care at The Poplars in those early days of August, an entirely reasoning being, but she had lacked animation and life; she had been like Gibson's Venus, before the flesh tints

were put on the statue; but she was now a bright, living, thinking girl, with hopes and pleasures and aspirations which she had hitherto undreamt of.

In her cheerful little apartments in the Rue Montmartre she unfolded herself like a chrysalis from the grub, and bustled about and took an interest in everything around her which Doctor Jolly would have wondered at.

While Markworth was away, the Mère Cliquelle used to look after her and keep her company, and go out with her, and the dignified *bon homme* of that good lady would also frequently came up to see Madame and air his few English phrases. But Markworth used never to be long away. Havre was so very convenient that he could run over to Southampton and thence to London whenever he wished to see how matters were going on

for the approaching law suit; so he seldom stopped away beyond a couple of days. When he was at Havre, however, he continued to devote himself to Susan with all his former care, and tried to gratify every wish she had; and she was as happy as a bird.

One thing only was wanting to complete her happiness, and that was to see her brother Tom: that desire, however, was soon gratified. She had been disappointed sadly when Markworth returned the first time without him; but he said that Tom would soon come, and in a few more days he arrived at Havre. But he was actuated with no desire to see Markworth: it was only his sister that brought him over, and he wished to persuade her to return home, which he thought she might do at once as he, with the others, had made certain of Markworth retaining her

against her will. Indeed the lawyer Mr. Trump, or Doctor Jolly would have gone over to Havre at once to fetch her back on learning where she was—for Markworth had freely said that they might come to fetch her if they pleased,—for it was only at Tom's express wish that a few days were allowed to elapse to enable him to fetch her himself, for he was hardly able to move about as yet, notwithstanding that he had every desire to start off at once on first hearing the news. Miss Kingscott had offered to go, but the Dowager bluntly declined her services, saying that, as she had shown so little care in watching over her charge in the first instance, she certainly would not be now entrusted with the charge of bringing her back, and beyond that Mrs. Hartshorne said she did not require her services any longer.

So Miss Kingscott left The Poplars altogether, much against her inclinations at this juncture, although she would have more time at her disposal for watching Markworth, for it cut her off from all association with the doctor before matters were brought to a satisfactory point between them. Tom went over to Havre to fetch Susan home in a day or two afterwards, confident of bringing her back. We thus see several important alterations in the *carte du pays*, of the several actors in our little drama.

Markworth was out one day shortly after his own return to Havre when he had set his plans rolling on the other side, when Tom Hartshorne rang the bell at the house *Numero sept, Rue Montmartre.*

The Mère Cliquelle answered the summons and on Tom (in extremely bad French)

asking if Madame Markworth was in, the fat landlady herself ushered him upstairs. She was very much taken with the appearance of Master Tom, who really, with his fine built frame, slightly emaciated with the confinement he had undergone from his illness, and his pale face, looked altogether rather a handsome, presentable fellow. The Mère Cliquelle gazed upon him with admiration: she had a Frenchwoman's eye for *un brave Monsieur*, and she showed it.

She tapped at the door of Susan's little *salle à manger*. "*Un Monsieur Anglais*," she said, with which explanatory information Tom was ushered in before Susan could exactly comprehend what the Mère Cliquelle meant.

Susan gave one look up of surprise and joy as the door opened and she recognised the visitor: she had been working and had not

expected Markworth in for some time. Rushing forwards she flung her arms round Tom's neck.

"Oh, Tom! Tom! You've come at last!" she said, and patted his cheek in delight, as if she were caressing a cat—a peculiarly sympathetic way the fair sex have of showing their affection.

Tom himself was touched. He loved his sister greatly, the more too for her infirmity, and he though he comprehended it all at once in his reasoning mind. Poor Susan was no doubt kept here against her will: she was doubtless glad to see him for his own sake, but probably ten times more so, thinking he was about to take her back home again to England and her own people.

He thought thus for a moment; but he was soon undeceived. After a moment or two he

held his sister off from him, his two hands resting on her shoulders, and he looked in her face with surprise.

"By Jove, Susan!" he exclaimed. "How altered you are; I should not have known you again!" He had not seen her for some weeks, and the gradual change which had been taking place in her came upon him all at once like a shock.

"Would you not?" laughed Susan, "but I should have known you anywhere, although you look pale and thin. What has been the matter, Tom?"

"Oh nothing!" he answered. "I have not been quite well. But you, Susan, by Jove! why you are all right again!" he was amazed at her having got rid of that melancholy reticence which had hung over her for so many years as he well knew. Instead of

hanging back and not saying a word as she used to do, she now spoke to him freely, and looked just the same as any other girl. He could not believe it: it was wonderful!

"Of course I am all right!" answered Susan, merrily, and then her voice changed to a tone of sadness and anxiety, "but you are not angry with me, Tom, are you?"

"Certainly not! Why should I be angry?"

"For going away and leaving you all like that, and—"

She hesitated.

"We don't blame you, Susan, my dear," said Tom, kindly. "We know that it was all that rascal Markworth's doing."

Susan interrupted him at once, and spoke earnestly, with great emotion.

"Do not say a word against him, Tom; he is my husband, and I won't have a word said

against him. If I am changed it is all his doing, and I love him. He has rescued me from ignorance and worse, and made me what I now am. Tom, Tom, you must not say a word against him. I won't bear it even from you."

"There, there," said Tom, soothingly, as if he were speaking to a child, "I did not mean it, and I won't say another word. But are you happy?"

"Happy!" echoed Susan—the answer to his question could be read in her face—"I never knew what happiness was before. I do not mean to blame you, Tom," seeing the look of surprise in Tom's face, "but I could never understand before. I have to thank him for reason and all. I can never repay all that he has done for me."

Tom saw that it was useless to say any-

thing further, and he changed the tenor of the conversation.

"And how did you get over here, Susan?" he said, cheerfully. "Tell me how you got away, and all about it."

"I never intended to go away until the last moment," said Susan, "and I was so frightened of mother that if I had thought of her I should have turned back; but he was with me, and I felt courage, and the next morning we were married in London, I believe, and then we came over here; and, oh! Tom, I am so happy!"

She proceeded to tell him all about her daily life, and her little joys and pleasures.

Tom was greatly interested. He saw that Susan was immensely improved, and he could not but be glad at the change, however much he may have been angry at the way in which

it was brought about. Besides, no blame could be attached to her. Tom himself was in love, you see, and he could make greater allowances now on that score than he might previously have done. He saw that Markworth must be kind to her, and at all events, he had certainly done more good to Susan in these few weeks than all the doctors had done. For his part, he would cheerfully have let Markworth now have the money that he had plotted for, and be done with him altogether, but it did not rest in his hands, so the least he could do would be to try and get Susan to go back with him.

"And will you come home with me now, Susan?" he asked, after a pause. "We are all so anxious about you; and you will find things all right at home now, and mother will be very kind."

"And Allynne!—will he come too?"

"No, Susan; I can't ask him. You ought to know that."

"You want me to leave him? Tom, I will never leave him unless he sends me away himself."

Just at this moment the door opened, and Markworth walked in as coolly as possible. Susan darted past Tom and threw her arms round his neck.

"Oh! Allynne, Allynne!" she cried—she had learnt to call him by his Christian name, which no one else had done before—"they want to take me from you. You won't let me go, will you?"

"Of course not, Susan. There, Mr. Hartshorne," he said, turning to Tom. "I told you that I did not detain the girl against her will, and you can hear her answer for yourself. I

wish to act fairly in the matter, no matter how my motives are misunderstood. Susan," he said, again addressing her, "what will you do—go with your brother or stay here with me?"

The only answer she made was to cling closer round his neck.

Markworth looked at Tom triumphantly, and the latter felt humbled.

"I'm sure it is not my fault," he said. "I daresay you mean very well, Markworth, but I don't retract what I said to you the other day. It was dishonourable for you to take my sister away like that. As for the money, however, now that I see her well and happy, you might cheerfully have it for all I care."

"Thank you," said Markworth, really touched, "you are a generous fellow, and I promise you to take care of your sister carefully for

your sake as well as her own. She is well and happy now, and quite recovered, as you can see for yourself, but if she went back she might relapse again, although I won't prevent her from going."

Tom saw there was no use in trying to urge Susan, for she would not come with him and leave Markworth. He therefore only stopped that day with her, and returned on the morrow to Southampton, to report his want of success. He gave a very truthful account of his mission, and told both his mother and the doctor that Susan was quite restored. The old dowager appeared not to care very much about the matter, and reiterated her intention of preventing Markworth from "getting a penny of HER money." The doctor was pleased to hear such good accounts of his former patient, but he was apprehensive as to

the duration of Markworth's kind treatment to Susan.

"Bless my soul, sir!" said he to Tom, "it may be all very true now, but you can't expect to make a nigger change his skin, or make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as they say somewhere or other, in something I've read. That man's bad at the bottom, Tom, as certain as God made little apples!"—the doctor, in his customary manner, mixing up a hypothesis with two biblical proverbs.

Thus ended Tom's mission after Susan. He shortly afterwards arranged another enterprise with a different object, and how he fared here will be detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

"FIDDLE-DE-DEE!"

"FIDDLE-DE-DEE! Thomas," said the old dowager, with considerable asperity, "why you'll be wanting a glass coach and four, and a cocked hat next. Stuff and nonsense, sir, it's all fiddle-de-dee!"

"But, mother—"

"But me no buts sir! I tell you I won't have it, and that's enough."

"Really, mother."

"Really, indeed! I suppose you think I'm as great a fool as you are, Thomas."

"Pray don't excite yourself, mother," said Tom, trying to keep down the thermometer until he could obtain a fair hearing, but the old lady was not to be pacified, for his soothing words only added fuel to the fire.

"Excite myself, indeed! I should think there was a little cause for excitement to hear a baby like you talking of getting married! And hearding me in my own house to be sure! I tell you, Thomas, I won't have it!" And the dowager paced rapidly backwards and forwards on one side of the dining room with short, jerky steps, swinging her hands, with the fingers clasping and unclasping in unison with her nervous walk.

Tom walked up and down the room on the

other side, the table being entrenched between them. He took long military strides, and twirled the end of his moustache impatiently every now and then, for his temper too was rising. He did not reply at once, so his mother went on with a recapitulated volley of wrath. She had only been winding up as it were, before, and now burst out in a flowing stream of words, like an alarum clock running down, as if she had never paused from her last utterance.

"A boy like you—not of age yet, and whom I only carried in my arms the other day! You deserve to be whipped and sent to bed, sir! I never heard of such a thing in all my born days! And as for that little chit—she—she, I don't know what oughtn't to be done with her. Little minx! But it serves me right, putting that jackanapes of a

brother of hers into that snug living down there." And the dowager with a wave of her hand indicated Hartwood village. "There is he prancing about on that little beast of a pony of his every day after the heels of that fine my lady who wanted to poke her nose in here if I had only let her. I can see what's going on, although I do mind my own business! And now that artful little jade is trying to catch you with her big staring eyes! I wonder what you can see in her I'm sure. I know what she's after: they have heard that you are the heir, and they want to secure you for the family, but I'll spoil their tricks. I'm not going to be turned out of my own house yet. I'll pack that jackanapes of a brother off about his business, and as for the artful little minx—it's positively indecent a girl running after a boy like that! I saw what

they were fishing for, in sending up every day that Gezaba of a servant of theirs to enquire 'how Mister Tom was.' Mister Tom, indeed! It ought to be Master Tom, and he to be birched. The artful little minx! I'll—I'll—"

"Stop, mother," shouted Tom, seizing upon a favourable opportunity when the dowager paused a moment from loss of breath. "Stop, mother, I won't have you say a word against that young lady. I don't mind what you say of me, but I won't stand by and hear you abuse an innocent girl like that. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, mother, to use such language. Against your own sex, too, and a lady whom I intend to make my wife."

"Your wife!" screamed the old lady with tenfold vehemence and passion. "Your

wife! I'd sooner see you in your grave first!"

"You forget yourself, mother," said Tom, hotly. Like all easy-going men who have good tempers and are seldom roused up to anger, Tom took some time to lose his temper thoroughly, and when he did, he lost it completely. He was now in a regular passion, and his mother's taunts sent him up to fever heat.

"Forget myself, indeed!"—It was a case of flint and steel between the two.—"It is you that forget yourself, talking like a Bashaw of Nine Tails of marrying whom you please, as if you were a lord and master. Fine doings, indeed! why you're as mad as your sister Susan."

"You need not bring poor Susan into the conversation, mother. I'm sure she's very

happy, and I believe she did for the best, if this be a sample of a mother's affection, and what she would have met with at home"— Tom ejaculated bitterly.

"Oh! she did for the best, did she? And a fine mess she made of it, running off with that swindling vagabond. I would like to see him on the treadmill! If that was the only way in which she could get back her senses, it would have been better for her to have been dead at once. But it is the way with all silly women; they never seem to have their senses until they have tied themselves to some scoundrel who has only married them for their money. You are more mad than she is, Thomas. Marry, indeed! A pretty pass things are coming to. You're an idiot, and she's a minx, there!"

"I tell you, mother, I won't have you

say a word against that lady. If there be any fault attached to the business, which I can't see myself, she's not to blame at any rate."

"She's a little minx, there," repeated the dowager, with increased venom. She saw how well the shaft was aimed, and like a woman she pushed it in.

"I won't have it, mother."

"Minx! minx! minx! there!" uttered the old lady rapidly, giving her head a jerky nod after each repetition of the obnoxious epithet.

"This is scandalous!" said Tom, literally boiling over with passion. The term "minx," applied to Lizzie, having apparently the same effect on him as a red rag has on a bull, or a fat turkey gobler, to adapt a more ignoble simile. "I won't have it, whether

you're my mother or not, and I'll marry whom I please, without asking your leave or licence."

"You will, will you? I should like to know how you're going to support a wife? *I'm* not going to do it for you."

"I don't care whether you do or do not," said Tom, savagely.

The bull had been now tormented sufficiently, and the matador thought it time to give the *coup de grace.*

"Mark my words," said the dowager, impressively, "if you marry that chit, Thomas, or have anything more to do with her, or any of that toadying crew, not a penny piece of my money do you get, Thomas."

"Hang the money! I don't want it: I suppose I can get along somehow or other without it."

"Remember, you're not of age yet, young sir, and when you are, you won't be much better off, unless I please. You haven't a penny of your own now, except what I give you, and if you don't abandon the whole thing, not a penny more will you have."

The dowager was aware of the advantage in military tactics of cutting off the enemy's supplies.

"I'm sure I don't want it," said Tom; but he thought in a moment how ungracious this was to his mother, who had previously been so kind to him. "I mean, I don't want you to help me any more, if it's to be thrown in my teeth like this. I am very much obliged to you, mother, for what you have done for me already. That is past and gone, and I'm not going to sell myself now and break a trusting girl's heart for the sake of my future

chances. Hang the money! I hate the very sound of the word."

"But it is a very useful thing, Thomas—a very useful thing; and you don't seem to have had any objection to it before. It's very hard on me, Thomas, very hard." The old lady was broken now a good deal, after all the trouble she had gone through, and was not able to prosecute the combat with her customary vigour. "After I've been slaving and saving for you all these years to meet with such a return. It's a judgment on me; and if I had served my church better than I have served my son, it—it—" And the dowager fairly broke down for the first time in her life, after vainly attempting to paraphrase Cardinal Wolsey's memorable monologue.

Tom was fairly vanquished.

"I beg your pardon, mother. I did not mean to say anything unkind or ungrateful, but really—"

"After all I have done for you, too," whimpered Mrs. Hartshorne; "it's a judgment on me for neglecting your sister and making so much of you."

"I'm very sorry, mother, but I'm a man now, and this is a matter I must decide for myself."

"You shan't marry with my consent," retorted the dowager; "and you can't marry without that."

"You're my mother," said Tom, sadly emphasising that undeniable fact; "and you can ruin my hopes of happiness, if you please. But I shan't stop here; I shall go abroad."

"You go where you please," said the old

lady, in her usual sharp way, "so long as you give up that chit."

"I'm not going to give up anybody," said Tom, defiantly; "and I shall exchange into an Indian regiment to-morrow, and when I come of age I shall do as I please."

"Suit yourself," said the dowager, curtly; "but mark my words, not a penny of my money do you get."

At this point the engagement terminated, each party withdrawing their forces without undergoing either a defeat or a victory. It was a decided case of what the dowager had termed in the first instance, "Fiddle-de-dee!"

Tom, immediately after returning from his unsuccessful trip to Havre, had gone down

one fine morning to the pretty little parsonage-house at Hartwood.

This was not like the first visit he had paid after his convalescence. Then he had been prevented from speaking all he had to say, for Pringle was there; and however much a man may be in love and dying to speak out to the object of his young affections, he cannot very well do it in the presence of her brother. Much, therefore, as Tom liked Pringle, he had hated him at the time of his prior visit for his persistent presence.

"Why on earth could he not go away and set to work about his sermon or something else," Tom thought savagely at the time, and I believe his wishes were shared in this respect, mingled with a little trembling and nervousness, by Miss Lizzie herself, for she doubtless guessed what Tom wished to say.

There is something inherent in the divine sex which tells them at once when a male biped is going to make a fool of himself. But then Pringle had not gone away, and the tale, that billionth-told tale, had still to be told.

Why is it that writers always allude to a love episode as that "old, old story?" It is never old, my dear sir, or madam, or mayhap, mademoiselle. It is always new. That wonderful little drama, oftentimes a tragedy, in which two actors only take the parts. It is like the fabled Phœnix which possesses the faculty of reproduction, for it is perennially fresh, and young, and new.

Tom found Lizzie alone this time, and you may be certain he took advantage of the opportunity. You see the case had nearly been concluded before, and was well understood between the pair, so it did not require all that

serious preparation, and Quintus Curtian resolve before dashing into the yawning gulf. Tom plunged into it at once. Lizzie's fresh little face, with its melting violet eyes, and the pretty embarrassment which she displayed as she received him in her little conservatory, into which he walked at once to find her on hearing Pringle was out, made him fear nothing and all confident.

The impudent dog darted forward on catching sight of her; and, would you believe it, he had Lizzie folded in his arms before she knew where she was, murmuring over her "My darling, my darling!" And Miss Lizzie —I suppose from discretion, knowing how powerless she was against his strong arms, did not appear to offer any protest. "Abandoned girl!" I hear the old campaigner exclaiming in her dulcet accents.

Master Tom was not going to let the opportunity slip, you may be bound. He had been looking forwards to this, and thinking over the scene all the time he had been laid up, and he was quite prepared to act it.

"Lizzie, my darling," he whispered, after a pause, into her little pink ear, which was temptingly near him, "will you be my own darling little wife ?"

And Lizzie said nothing; she only looked up in his face. And their lips met in one long thrilling kiss.

Of course it was the old or new story all over again. Rehearse it, Damon; fight the love-strife over again, Phyllis, and you have the scene complete.

They were in the conservatory all the time; and it was curious how after Pringle came in what a tremendous lot of gardening

Lizzie had to do, and how she could not move the pots about, or exercise her little trowel without Tom's help. Shortly afterwards she darted off up-stairs somehow with a very flushed face. Stooping always does send the colour to one's head, you know. And then Tom told Lizzie's brother all about it.

"I'm awfully glad, old fellow," said Herbert Pringle, M.A.—"I am awfully glad, old fellow. Nothing could have pleased me better. I thought you were rather spoony on Lizzie, you know, all along, and I was expecting something like this."

And they shook hands together in mutual congratulation. Tom thought Lizzie's brother a very fine, good-natured, clever fellow indeed!

"By-the-way," said Pringle, after a pause, "have you asked your mother about this?"

Tom looked rather glum; he thought Lizzie's brother a little like the stern parent now.

"Not yet," he answered. "I am going up to tell her now; but it'll be all right, you know."

"I am very glad to hear it, for I would not let you and Lizzie enter into any engagement without her consent. It would not be right, as she's placed me here in her parish, you know."

Herbert Pringle had very serious thoughts on the subject of etiquette, and rather doubted the dowager's consent being obtained, from all he had heard of her from the campaigner, and knew of her himself.

"Oh! that'll be all right," said Tom.

And then Lizzie had come down again, looking bewitchingly beautiful, and Tom

spent an hour of ecstacy, after which he took up his hat to go.

Lizzie knew the errand he was now going on—to speak to the dowager—and she wished tearful success to him, and gave him a pretty adieu as he went off exultant: for he said his mother would never refuse her consent to an angel!

How he fared in his enterprize has been already detailed, for as soon as he hinted at the thing his mother had broken out with her characteristic diatribe.

And now the pleasant little drama was brought to an abrupt conclusion. It was all over! He could not marry Lizzie without his mother's consent; the crimson sea of love was now covered with the heaving billows of adversity. He would go abroad somewhere, for he should go mad if he

stopped here and could not see his darling, and Lizzie, of course, she would die of a broken heart: it was always the usual routine in tragedies like this.

Tom was very miserable, for he had yet to see Lizzie and her brother—from whom he had gone off so exultant—and tell of his defeat.

The world was a blank to him now!

"Fiddle-de-dee!"

CHAPTER X.

MARKWORTH *versus* HARTSHORNE.

MARKWORTH was as good as his word.

As soon as he saw that there was no chance of prevailing on the old dowager to pay over Susan's inheritance without calling in the aid of the law, he quickly set the slowly-moving wheels of that ponderous and unwieldly machinery in motion.

The very day Mr. Trump and himself both

got back to London, Mrs. Hartshorne was served, through her solicitors, with a notice to refund the sum of twenty thousand pounds cash, trust money held by her on behalf of her daughter, Susan Markworth *née* Hartshorne, and bequeathed by the late Roger Hartshorne, deceased, now claimed by Allynne Markworth on behalf of his wife Susan, as beforesaid.

This legal notice was sent to Messrs. Trump, Sequence, and Co., by a firm of Jewish notoriety, Solomonson and Isaacs, unknown to Mr. Trump, save through the columns of the "Law List"—although their names were frequently seen in the newspapers, under the head of "Police Intelligence," as the defenders of low class criminals and receivers of stolen goods.

"Mishter Sholomonshon" had not only

been willing to act as Markworth's banker, "for a shtrong conshiderashun, ma dere shir," pending the suit, but also agreed to act as his legal adviser in the matter, and instruct counsel for carrying on the case. As Markworth looked upon all attorneys as alike, they all being, in his estimation, "limbs of the devil," without any distinction between them, he consented willingly to the arrangement, particularly as he knew Solomonson was as sharp as a needle, and he was not at all averse to his being a Jew; besides, he already knew all about the matter, and Markworth was not personally acquainted with any other lawyers.

"Sharp work!" said Mr. Trump, rubbing his hands gleefully in anticipation of a lengthy suit and a long bill of costs when this notice was served. "Sharp work; but I don't like to have to act with that rascally Jew

firm; I wish the rogue had respectable solicitors. It can't be helped though now—"

"Quite so," murmured Mr. Sequence, affirmatively, looking at his partner straight in the face, with his dull eyes and expressionless features.

"But we'll stop their little game," continued Mr. Trump, as if speaking to himself, without taking any notice of Sequence at the moment. He presently turned to him, however, and the two, after some little deliberation, settled upon what course they should pursue.

Mr. Trump was resolved, according to the dowager's express wish and his own personal inclination—that fifty pounds rankled sorely in his breast!—to fight the case to the death.

The notice was answered by a peremptory refusal to pay over the trust money.

Whereupon Mrs. Hartshorne was invited

in judicial parlance through her solicitors to show cause why she should not refund the said sum of twenty thousand pounds.

The rule, "to show cause," was retorted to by sundry pleas, the first of which averred never indebtedness, and the others that the plaintiff, Allynne Markworth, had coerced the said Susan Hartshorne, falsely termed Susan Markworth, on whose behalf the trust money was claimed, which claim was null and void, and without foundation in the eyes of the law, inasmuch as the said plaintiff "had entered into a conspiracy to obtain the money of a person of unsound mind, under the pretence of going through a marriage ceremony with a person who, in the eye of the law, could not make a binding contract."

These pleas were replicated, and the whole thing resolved itself into a formal case at law

—a very important case of medical jurisprudence, wherein the evidence for the defence was to impeach the sanity of the plaintiff's principal witness.

Everything was at length arranged. The preliminaries of the combat were all settled, and counsel were engaged on either side. The foemen were eager for the fray, a day was fixed for the trial, late in the Michaelmas term, and on the day of battle appointed, the lists would be lined by the partizans of the respective combatants, who would then enter the arena with visors closed and lances couched—visors of legal dust with which to blind their opponent's eyes, and not to save their own, and lances of parchment briefs with substantial butts of strong witnesses—to fight the bewigged and begowned battle until either foe should fall. When "God defend the right,"

or in the more colloquial language of the prize ring, "may the best man win."

The case of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne" created an immense sensation in legal circles when it was known that a day had been appointed for giving it a hearing.

The issues involved were very intricate; and, as in most cases based on a point of lunacy, the sympathy of the public, who, as yet, knew nothing reliable about the matter, was in favour of Markworth and his wife, the latter of whom would be, it was said, produced in court to testify her own sanity at the time she married the plaintiff.

The whole case, in fact, rested upon this point—whether the marriage was a real marriage or not—that is to say, whether Susan Hartshorne was sane or insane at the time she ran away with Markworth. If she was

in her right senses at the time, then the marriage was *bonâ fide*, and the old dowager would have to hand over the nice little amount of her daughter's inheritance that was due; if Susan was proved to be imbecile, then the marriage would be void, the dowager would still retain her hold of the twenty thousand pounds, and Markworth be indictable for conspiracy.

It was a civil suit, so to speak, based on criminal ends; so it would go worse with the plaintiff than the defendant should his case fall through.

Solomonson and Isaacs, however, were sharp practitioners, and one of their first proceedings was to subpœna Doctor Jolly, who had attended Susan so long as her medical adviser, and who, of course, would be a very material witness: this was in order to pre-

vent the other side from getting hold of him; and Miss Kingscott was also favoured with a little oblong slip of paper and a guinea in order to insure her attendance to the same end.

They were sharp enough, as Mr. Trump found out to his cost; for before the day fixed for the trial, the dowager's lawyers were at their wits end how to support their case. They had got hold of Joseph Begg, who had witnessed the marriage, and the curate who solemnised it, to bear out the alleged charge of conspiracy against Markworth, but beyond that they felt they could do nothing. If Susan were placed in the witness-box, and stood her cross-examination so as to prove her sanity, the case would be all put out of court, or, as Mr. Trump graphically expressed it, "it would be all up."

Indeed, Mr. Trump had such very serious thoughts about the termination of the case, after he had thoroughly gone into the evidence *pro* and *con*, that he took upon himself to advise Mrs. Hartshorne to compromise the matter before it came on for trial. This was just after Tom came back from his visit to Susan and reported how happy and changed she was.

But the dowager would not hear a word of compromise. She was determined to "fight it out on that line," as General Grant is reported to have said when besieging Richmond in the Southern States, not only "if it took all the summer," but the winter too.

Accordingly the case of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne," was regularly put down for trial; and Sergeants Thickhyde, Q.C., and Silvertong retained for the defence. The Jew

lawyers had got hold of the well-known Brassy, considered A 1 at the criminal bar, and Serjeant Interpleader, to conduct their case on Markworth's behalf.

CHAPTER XI.

"THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME."

"*Partant pour la Syrie,*" should have been the proper title for this chapter, only instead of *la Syrie*, read *l'Abysinne;* but as "The girl I left behind me" is more appropriate to the matter, if not to the motive of what follows, the latter heading has been adopted in preference. "The Girl I left behind me!" That would-be jovial and yet melancholy air,

with its dreary rub-a-dub-dub which the band plays when the regiment is marching out so gaily oh! with the route for foreign service. The Light Brigade played it when they started off to the Crimea; the Royals when they sailed for India, to avenge the deaths of our murdered kinswomen at Cawnpore: how many that departed so gallantly marching to the strains of that sad hackneyed tune, saw their native land again, or met the welcome of the girls they left behind them!

The "fiddle-de-dee" conversation with the old dowager had levelled the charming little Spanish castle which Tom had erected down to the ground; so it was with a very sad heart that he called at the parsonage on the following day to acquaint Lizzie and her brother with the upshot of his interview with his mother.

He was obliged to speak out straight and tell the truth: and it resulted in his worst fears being realised. Herbert Pringle said he could not hear of an engagement between them, as Mrs. Hartshorne would not give her consent; and Lizzie, with a very pale little face and a determined little air, as if she was a martyr and being led to the stake, said she would have to do as her brother told her.

Tom, on hearing this, burst into a passion, and said she had "never cared for him," and that "nobody cared for him," and he "wished he was dead," and that he "would go away," and "when some bullet put an end to his life" she "would think of him," a false, "fickle, perjured girl as she was;" and he went off in a tantrum, unmindful of Lizzie's pleading little face, and the longing violet eyes, and the pale, tearless cheek.

Tom went straight off to rejoin his regiment, the depôt of which was quartered at Aldershot. He told the Colonel, who was an old bachelor, and regarded Tom as a son, that he wanted to exchange and go on foreign service.

"Pooh, pooh!" said the old Plunger, who had grown grey in the regiment, and seen much service at its head in India and the Crimea—"Pooh, pooh, Tom; why, you must be crossed in love, my boy!"

Tom was very sad over it, and very stern; he could not see anything to joke about. He told the colonel that he was very unhappy at home, and wished to go away for a time; and if he could assist him in furthering his object, he, Tom, would ever remain grateful, and so on.

The Colonel was a kind hearted old fellow,

and seeing that Tom was sore wounded, he did not rally him any more on the subject, but entered into it *con amore*.

"I'll do anything for you, Tom, my boy, that I can. You know that without my saying it; and if you really do want to go abroad, I can put you in the way of it this present moment."

"Can you, Colonel?" said Tom, earnestly; "I wish you would."

"That I will, my boy! You know the Abyssinian Expedition is just starting out."

"By Jove!" said Tom, "that's just what I should like."

"Easy, my boy—easy! Don't run away with the squad like that all at once! I'm just coming to it, my boy."

"Pray excuse me, sir," said Tom, who was

dying for the rather easy-going Colonel to proceed.

"All right, my boy—all right. You see, I met my friend Sir Charles, who goes out with the advanced corps, the other day in London, and he told me that if I knew any smart young officer who would like to go out, he would be happy to let him come with him as one of his aides-de-camp, to oblige me."

"Oh, sir!" ejaculated Tom, in anxiety.

"The question is, my boy, are you a smart young officer, and can I recommend you?" the Colonel asked, being a bit of a wag, as he saw the sudden joy which irradiated the suppliant's face.

"I would thank you so much, sir," ejaculated Tom; "I am sure I could be useful to him if you would only recommend me."

"Much use you would be, to be sure! I suppose you would teach him the last waltz step, and tell him how to flirt, you dog!"

"Oh, sir—you'll oblige me, Colonel, won't you? and do me this favour?"

"Well, I don't mind if I do, Tom. You are a young scamp I know, but I've a sort of liking for you, and I'll give you a letter of introduction to Sir Charles. But you must go up to London at once, for he'll be off in a day or two. I daresay you can catch him at that den of thieves, the Horse Guards, or else at his club."

"Oh! thank you, sir," said Tom, shaking the old veteran heartily by the hand. "Oh! thank you, Colonel; I'll never forget your kindness."

"There, there, my boy—take it easily. And now if you will kindly let me have my

arm to myself, I will sit down and write you your letter at once, and also one to the commander-in-chief, which will facilitate your movements."

The Colonel then sat down and wrote as he promised; and Tom was off in a jiffey to London. In the joy of going off, he had for a moment forgotten Lizzie, only to remember her with a ten times greater fondness a moment or two later.

Being diligent in his explorations, Tom speedily found his new chief, who received him very cordially, and said how very glad he was to be able to do anything for the old Plunger veteran, from whom he had just come. Tom, to his great joy, was appointed one of the aides-de-camp of the general who was going off with the expeditionary force to Abyssinia. He was only just in time, however,

for the places had all been filled up. Tom indeed owed his luck to the sudden illness of one of the officers already appointed.

What a wonderful thing that Abyssinian Expedition was! The world sees some queer changes in its time. Twenty-eight hundred and fifty years ago the Queen of Sheba paid her celebrated visit to King Solomon at Jerusalem, and here, so many centuries after, we have the children of the Gentiles and the inhabitants of the Isles of the West sallying out and getting them ready to battle against the descendants of the self-same King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba across the waters of the Red Sea.

Tom had very few days in which to prepare for his departure. It was now October, and he had to go by the overland route to India

first, and then to sail from Bombay with the advance guard of the invading army.

His mother was very much vexed at his going away. She did not think he would have acted up to what he had threatened; but Tom had the same stubborn temper at bottom, and what he had said he would stick to, so she could not alter it. As she saw this she did not press him, for she knew it would be no use; his preparations were therefore rather hurried.

Tom, however, was not going to part from Lizzie in that way. He had rushed off that time in a passion, but he was not going to leave her so abruptly, and he went down again to the parsonage to make his peace in his own way.

The little conservatory witnessed many

little tender scenes before the day of his departure came, although the time was but short for them to be acted in. Pringle had interposed scruples at first, but his calm course of ecstacy with the languid Laura made him somewhat more lenient than the campaigner, his future mother-in-law—the time was drawing on now—would have approved.

Tender little scenes of love these were in that romantic conservatory, which had witnessed all Tom's love-making and all his short happiness. Little repetitions and conjugations of the same verb *amo* over and over again, with its present, and its past, and its future subjunctive tenses. Who has not lived and loved and can fill in all these details? Ah! how well remembered they are—the looks, the smiles, the tears, the joys, the sorrows, the ecstacies of love's young dream!

Tom Moore was more eloquent on the subject than Göethe, who told—

> Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück;
> Ich habe gelebt und geliebt.

is not half so expressive as the Irish Catullus.

Fond hearts are severed however, if sometimes only for a time. Tom came down one day to the parsonage to take his last farewell. He had bidden adieu to his mother before. Lizzie he wanted to see last of all! She was the girl he left behind him.

It was very sad for the young lovers to part like this, just when they were beginning to know each other.

But perhaps it was for the best. With true love "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," with the article of dross the reverse proverb holds true. Perhaps as it is preferable to be

able to know which is the real Simon Pure: a separation sometimes works well.

There is little good in dwelling on last words.

The parting was only for a time, as Tom fondly told Lizzie, trying to cheer her up.

One long embrace, one last kiss, and Tom was off. The young Dunois had sallied forth for the Orient, and Lizzie wept like Medora at the departure of Conrad the Corsair, thinking, if not exclaiming—

"And is he gone?" On sudden solitude
How oft that question will intrude!
"'Twas but an instant past, and here he stood!
And now"—without the portal's porch she rush'd,
And then her tears at length in freedom gush'd;
Big, bright, and fast, unknown to her they fell,
And still her lips refused to send "Farewell!"

CHAPTER XII.

COUNTER TRAPS.

Clara Kingscott, when Mrs. Hartshorne sent her away from The Poplars in that ignominious manner, telling her she did not require her services any further, was more than half inclined not to prosecute her design against Markworth in revealing her share in inducing Susan to go away with him, out of pure spite against the old dowager.

"I'll make the old cat pay for it," she said to herself. "If I don't prove anything against Markworth she'll have to pay him all that money, and she shall too!"

But after some deliberation in the matter Miss Kingscott saw that she would, according to the proverb, "be biting off her nose to spite her face," and surrendering her long cherished revenge from a mere passing pique. It would never do; she thought she had been cold and calculating enough to achieve her purpose, and here she was going off at a tangent and sacrificing all she looked and hoped for these many years but for a petty loss of temper. No, she might be sent away from The Poplars, but she would still achieve that grand purpose of her life, and no regret at benefitting the harsh old woman she called her mistress should prevent her from ruining

Markworth. That she had sworn, and would stick to.

She took some temporary satisfaction out of the old dowager by abusing her to her heart's content to her face, so astonishing that worthy lady, who had not had a person exchange retorts with her for years, that Miss Kingscott made her exit with flying colours just shortly before Tom started off for Abyssinia.

No one was very much grieved at her departure, except the old doctor, who said it was "A dooced shame sending away a poor girl like that, marm!" to the mistress of The Poplars, who told him in reply to mind his own business, and not to "be dancing to her house" any more, as he "had nothing and nobody to dance there for now, thank goodness!"

The doctor had held his peace, and went his way a wiser if a sadder man, saying unto himself, "Bless my soul! It's an infernal shame, and she's a dooced fine girl, and it's a great pity," after taking an affecting adieu of his late love, whom he commanded to have no scruples about writing to him in case she wanted any assistance. You see the old lady was present all the while, and the doctor could not repeat his declaration in her presence, however much he may have been tempted so to do.

In this manner Clara Kingscott went away, shaking the Sussex dust from her feet and came to London, The Poplars being left to its own solitude after Tom's departure, with the old dowager twice as cross and rancorous and grinding to her tenants as before. I believe she even missed the governess after a time,

for now the old doctor hardly ever came, and she had no one to quarrel with; no one who would answer her back again that is, for "Garge" took all she gave him, as did the old women servant, and there is no fun in having the quarrelling all to oneself. It takes two to make a fair quarrel, but the poor old dowager had no one now but herself. She paid off, however, her deprivation on Mr. Trump, writing long letters every day to him about the progress of the suit, and making the lawyer swear at old ladies in general and Mrs. Hartshorne in particular, and curse the inventors of pen, ink, and paper, and Sir Rowland Hill for the penny post.

The governess, when she arrived in London, took some comfortable apartments for herself; she could afford to wait awhile, for she had plenty of money besides her salary, which

latter she had rigorously exacted from the dowager to the last penny, including a month's notice, for which she gave a receipt in full, and she could afford to look about and suit her own convenience as to her future plans.

By a strange coincidence, she, after hunting about for a day or two, took lodgings in the very house where Markworth had formerly lived in Bloomsbury, and had the very same landlady, Mrs. Martin, as hostess. That good lady being very fond of chat, like most landladies, and as "the parlors," as Miss Kingscott became called from taking these rooms, had no friends coming to see her, she would frequently drop in "of an evenink" to pass the time of day: also, like most landladies, Mrs. Martin would recount all the deeds and doings of her former lodgers, in which narrative she did not fail to mention

Mr. Markworth, "The best gentleman as any lady ever had; so quiet and giving no trouble, and always paying his rent that regular as you might depend upon it like the Bank of England as ever was!"

It was not surprising under these circumstances, therefore, that Miss Kingscott soon got a little further information about the gentleman around whom she was busily weaving her coils, and learnt in a very short time—just through passing curiosity, that's all, she was so much interested in what that good Mrs. Martin had to tell of her lodgers—all about the habits of Markworth, and that "sister" of his he had brought up from the country, and how he had removed all his things, and gone off at last without a word of warning; although "I'll do him the justice to say he behaved as a perfect gentleman, that he did, and paid a

month's rent in advance," said Mrs. Martin, which capped what the governess had got out of the old dowager, and placed the lodging-house keeper and herself on a par.

"Markworth *versus* Hartshorne" was rapidly coming on for trial, when late one evening, just as he was thinking of shutting up his office, and going home for the night—the clerks, but one, had all departed an hour since—Mr. Trump had a visitor.

"Ah, ha! Miss Kingscott, glad to see you," said the lawyer, rising from his chair as she entered. He was by himself, Sequence and the "Co." having retired for the evening, and he was then writing busily by the aid of a couple of greasy candles, which flared, now to the right, now to the left, from the draught through the half-open door. "Glad to see you; can I do anything for you? it's rather

late, but never too late for business, you know!" And he rubbed his hands with a sort of congratulatory and metallic rub.

"Yes," answered the governess, speaking deliberately, in her cold, calm voice; "I wanted to speak to you, and that's the reason you see me here. You know, I suppose, that I have left Mrs. Hartshorne's employment?"

"Yes—sorry for it too—hasty business; but you must remember the old lady is a leetel hasty sometimes, and I ought to know it as well as anybody."

"You are right, sir; she is too hasty sometimes, and was a little too much so for her own good very nearly: only that it serves my purpose to help her, I would not now be here. That case is very nearly coming on, is it not?"

"What, Markworth *versus* Hartshorne?

Yes; but I thought you were subpœnaed on the other side?"

"So I am, but I can help your side a good deal!"

"Indeed, Miss Kingscott! I do not like as a rule to tamper with an opponent's witness, but as they played so very sharply with us, I think we may stretch a point in the present instance." And the lawyer again rubbed his hands expectantly, waiting for what the governess had to say.

"Now, what I am going to tell you," continued Miss Kingscott, "I am going to disclose in confidence, and I wish you to pledge me your word—I know you to be a gentleman, and I believe you to be a man of honour—that not a particle of the information I give you is to be mentioned by you until the

day the trial comes on, when, of course, you are welcome to make what use you please of it!"

"That's very strange, Miss Kingscott, very strange. I don't know what I might be binding myself to!"

"You will find nothing to reflect on you, sir," resumed the governess, "I shall be the only one who will suffer; and the very fact of my telling you what I will do will be a proof of its truthfulness and veracity. You can, in the meantime, substantiate anything I say by your own personal enquiry."

"It's very strange! very strange, indeed, madam! But I take your word for it, and will pledge myself as you require, excepting always," he added, with his legal acumen, "that it does not prejudice my future act on in the matter."

"It certainly will not; I shall want you to act!" said Miss Kingscott; and thereupon she told the astonished lawyer all about her complicity with Markworth, the compact between them, and how it was carried out.

"Dear me, this is very strange!" said the lawyer, when she had concluded. "You haven't got any document to show, have you, in proof of what you say?"

"No; only my word."

"Quite so! Quite so! What am I thinking of? Why, the very fact of your coming forward, and implicating yourself in the conspiracy will be proof enough."

The lawyer did not look on Miss Kingscott with the same deference that he had previously shown her. He eyed her somewhat askance, but he presently resumed his cross-examination.

"And you gave him the date of Susan's coming of age, eh!"

"Yes; I got it out of the family Bible. It was the 27th of August, I remember it well—just the day before they had the pic-nic—when he took Susan off."

"Humph! The 27th of August," said Mr. Trump, reflectively, as he looked over a little document he had before him, at first carelessly, but in a moment or two more eagerly. "The 27th of August, eh—that's strange!" He continued to pore upon the mass of papers on his desk, and then he suddenly seized a large, old-fashioned volume that also lay before him. "The twenty-seventh, eh? Then, by George, Miss Kingscott, I'm a born idiot! Hurrah!" he shouted, rising, and dashing the volume to the other end of the room, as if he were taken suddenly mad, and quite alarming the

governess, who hastily got up, and cried out—

"Mr. Trump! Mr. Trump! what is the matter, sir?"

"Matter, eh? Matter enough. I'm a born fool! Why that rascal married the girl before she came of age. She was not of age until the 29th of August; and, by George, the mistake in the figure will spoil every chance he had, and prevent the necessity of your services, or any trial at all!"

"Gracious! Mr. Trump, is that really so, and it is only found out now?"

"Fact, madam. I'm a born idiot! Why, the whole thing could have been nipped in the bud at once; and none of us to have seen that thing which was glaring in our faces all the time, and going to let the case come on for trial! Dear! Dear! I'm a born idiot,

madam, and so is Sequence, and we'd better now shut up shop!"

"And that will end the case at once?"

"Certainly, at once; why, he's got no right to claim anything now, as he will know very shortly, from the very wording of the will."

"I'm glad of it; but I should have liked mine to have been the hand to work his ruin."

"Very sorry, I'm sure, for your sake, madam; but you see we don't want your help now, although I should have been very glad to use it a minute or two ago! I shall write to that vagabond at once. He gave me an address at an hotel the other day, and he said he would stop there until the trial came on, in case we wanted to compromise, which, I confess, I once did. But now, hurrah! the rascal's done for without that. I shall be

happy to see you any other time, Miss Kingscott; but I shall have to be very busy now, and if you will excuse me—yes—good evening, madam—ah—" And the governess was bowed out.

Mr. Trump, when he was by himself, gave vent to a long, congratulatory chuckle; after which he called out to his clerk, Smiffens, in the outer office, and told him all about it.

"By George, Smiffens! what fools we all have been to be sure. There was that plain evidence of the girl's birth, and the date of the marriage staring us in the face all the time, and not one of us perceived it! By George! Smiffens, what a fool I am!"

"Certainly, sir," answered the old clerk, meekly, his hair standing bolt upright as he spoke.

"Go to the devil, sir! What do you mean? Confound your impudence!"

"Certainly, sir," said Smiffens, in the same tone of voice as before; and he went towards the door, slowly.

"Stop!" sang out Mr. Trump, who had not paused a moment writing all the time. "Here, copy these two letters, and deliver them before you go home. One is for Mr. Markworth fixing an appointment for to-morrow morning, so be sure to tell the waiter or porter at the Tavistock, where he is staying, to be certain and give it to him to-night. The other letter is for Solomonson and Isaacs, which you can post."

The clerk did as he was bidden; and Mr. Trump went off to his suburban home very well satisfied with his day's work. No cause

now or need for any witnesses or evidence, or for the praiseworthy exertions of Sergeants Thickhyde and Silvertong. The suit of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne" was quashed ere yet it had begun.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BITER BIT.

THE lawyer's letter surprised him somewhat, but Markworth had no fears or presentiment of what was the motive or would be the upshot of the missive.

"Ha!" he thought, "they want to compromise, do they? It's rather late in the day for that, and they won't catch me with any

chaff. But I may as well go round and see what they are after."

At eleven o'clock precisely, the hour they had fixed for the interview, Markworth tapped at the half-open green baize door which led into the outer office of Messrs. Trump, Sequence and Co.'s chambers in Bedford Row.

"Mr. Trump in?" he asked of the old clerk, whose desk, surmounted by the mahogany face and head, with the grizzled hair standing upon end as if it had been electrified, faced the door.

"Yes, sir," answered that worthy, speaking through his shut lips, "Mr. Trump and Mr. Sequence both in. Yer name Markworth, b'lieve?"—and Markworth nodded—"Waiting to see you. Both in there!" pointing to the door of the inner office, where, on enter-

ing, our friend found the lawyers arranged in state, one on each side of a table, covered with papers and a wrinkled parchment folio, endorsed on the outside, "Last will and testament of Roger Hartshorne, deceased." Markworth took in all the preparations at a glance, the lawyers with their pleasant about-to-perform-an-operation expression of face, the paper-covered table, the will, the dentist-like looking easy chair, placed handily for him between the solicitors, exposing him to their fire on either flank, and all.

"Aha! Good morning, Mr. Markworth. Fine day," said Mr. Trump; and "Aha! Good morning, Mr. Markworth. Fine day," echoed Mr. Sequence after him, as customary, in his feeble treble.

"Good morning," he answered, "You sent for me, eh?"

"We sent for you, Mr. Markworth, because," said Mr. Trump, smiling and rubbing his hands gleefully, as he always did before plunging into his subject. "We sent for you, Mr. Markworth, because," said the echo, without any smile, however, or rubbing of hands.

"Because what, sir?" exclaimed Markworth, turning round abruptly on poor little Sequence, who of course had not a word to say for himself until his principal gave him the cue.

Mr. Trump came gallantly to the rescue.

"We sent for you, Mr. Markworth, because we wished to have some conversation on the subject of the case put down for the present term of Markworth *versus* Hartshorne. We represent the defendant, as you know."

"Certainly, Mr. Trump; but don't you

think you had better consult my solicitor, as the matter is entirely out of my hands?"

"Hum! I think you'll agree with us after hearing what we have to say, that the communication which we have to make had better be addressed to you in the first instance."

"You wish to compromise the thing, I suppose?"

"Pray don't be so hasty, my *dear* sir," responded Trump, still smiling affably.

And "My *dear* sir!" chimed in Sequence, as usual.

"We don't suppose anything, and we don't pledge or commit ourselves to anything. Don't be so hasty, my *dear* sir; it's very unprofessional, *very* unprofessional."

And "Very unprofessional," squeaked Sequence.

"I wish you would come to the point at once!" said Markworth, angrily.

Mr. Trump at once dropped his professional smile. Glancing his eyes carelessly over a paper before him, and taking up the will, he spoke out in a straight, business-like manner, while Mr. Sequence sat himself bolt upright in his chair, and tried to look very stern and pre-occupied indeed.

"You are aware," said Mr. Trump, looking Markworth full in the face, "that the late Roger Hartshorne, deceased"—he smacked out his adjectives with an oily gusto, did Mr. Trump—"Deceased;" he repeated the word as if loth to abandon it, "left his daughter Susan the sum of twenty thousand pounds sterling, free of legacy duty, to be inherited by her on her arriving at the age of twenty-one years; or, should she marry before arriv-

ing at the said age of twenty-one years, and after she had attained the age of eighteen years, *providing* that the said marriage should be sanctioned, and by the express will and consent of her mother, if alive, or in case of her death by an appointed guardian, a certain Doctor Richard Jolly, as mentioned in the will of the Testator, then and in such case she was to receive the annual interest at the rate of five per cent. per annum, chargeable on the property of the Testator, until she should arrive at the said age of twenty-one years, when she would be put in possession of all right, title, and interest whatever in the said sum of twenty thousand pounds, free of legacy duty. I believe that's the wording of the will?"

"My dear sir," interrupted Markworth, blandly, "what on earth are you repeating all

that legal gibberish to me for? I knew all that long ago."

"I've no doubt, sir, no doubt of *that*. You are a man of the world, Mr. Markworth, like myself, and you'll pardon my hinting that you probably took a glance at this self same will before committing yourself in the matrimonial noose with our rustic young friend. Ha! ha!"

And Mr. Trumph laughed a taking, "good joke" sort of laugh. So genial was he, in fact, that Markworth could not help joining in the laugh, and thought himself a very smart and clever fellow indeed.

"You're a sharp fellow, Mr. Trump," he said roguishly, giving Mr. Trump a metaphorical poke in the ribs.

"A sharp fellow! a sharp fellow!" chorused

Mr. Sequence; and the three were all at once laughing cordially together, as friendly as you please.

What charming agreeable fellows dentists are: what capital jokes they make, and what highly seasoned anecdotes they retail just before drawing out a tooth.

Mr. Trump was now going to produce his plyers; he had had them concealed in the professional way up his sleeve all this time.

"Pardon me, Mr. Markworth," he said, all at once, when the chuckle had died out, turning grave and business-like once more. "Pardon me, but what I was reading from that will has a good deal to do with what I am now going to say. Supposing that I admitted for argument's sake, only as a mere figure of speech so to say, that Susan Hartshorne when

she married you was perfectly sane, and was not coerced into the measure against her will ?"

"Ha ! you admit that."

"I don't admit it at all, my dear sir ; I only used it just for mere argument's sake."

"That, Mr. Trump, is just the question we are going to try, and I flatter myself our case is very good ; you have got to prove that she was insane, and it seems incomprehensible to me how you are going to do it against the evidence we have—that of her governess and people who had seen her before the marriage—indeed we will have her own evidence in the witness box. I don't see how, Mr. Trump, you will be able to prove a conspiracy after that. Besides, we will produce her medical attendant and guardian, as you term him, Doctor Jolly."

"Ah! that was sharp practice subpœning him! I give you great credit for that stroke, Mr. Markworth; but allow me to say we are not arguing the case now."

"And I don't see how I can come into any compromise so late in the day, Mr. Trump! We have the whole thing as clear as a pike-staff, and you won't have a leg to stand upon when it is brought into court."

"Humph! we'll see," ejaculated the senior partner, and "we will see," followed Mr. Sequence, parrot-like, after him. "But I did not make any allusion to such a thing as a compromise, Mr. Markworth," continued Mr. Trump.

"Then what have you brought me here for? I will wish you good morning," he said, rising, and taking up his hat to go, angrily.

"Stay! Don't be so hasty; pray don't be

so hasty, Mr. Markworth; you may be certain that I would not have asked you to call unless I had something important to communicate," said Mr. Trump, soothingly.

"Then, why don't you get to it at once, instead of beating about the bush," he answered, still only half appeased, and resuming his seat in the dentist-like chair.

"I am just coming to the point, my dear sir, just coming to that; but, you see, we must speak of things in a professional way."

"Certainly, in a professional way," said Mr. Sequence, nodding his head sagaciously, as if in confirmation of Mr. Trump's remark; while Markworth twirled his hat impatiently between his fingers, and wondered what "those two rogues were after now!"

"By the terms of the will of the late Roger Hartshorne, deceased," resumed Mr. Trump,

unctiously, "without exactly phrasing it in legal language, Mr. Markworth, you will see that, putting the question of Susan Hartshorne's sanity or insanity, as I said before, entirely out of the argument—and that remains to be proved"—he said, significantly, "if she married you without her mother's consent before she was twenty-one years of age, she forfeited all right and claim to the bequest mentioned in her father's will."

"Quite right, and I thought we settled all that before," responded Markworth, knowingly. He continued, as if in response to a question from the lawyer. "Quite right, Mr. Trump. But you see, I took very good care that the happy day on which I called her mine should not be until after the date on which she came of age;" and Markworth laughed very heartily. Strange to say, neither

Mr. Trump nor his partner joined in the laugh this time; both of them looked more stolid and parchmenty than ever. The senior of the firm went on straight to the point.

"That is just the question we have to decide, Mr. Markworth."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say," answered Mr. Trump, calmly. "That's the point," said Mr. Sequence; and both looked at their subject composedly—just like dentists!

"What the devil do you mean? staring at me like that," said Markworth, angrily, and turning pale with apprehension. "What pettifoggery are you raking up now? I'm not to be frightened easily."

"We are not pettifoggers, Mr. Markworth, and have no wish to intimidate you or any other person; but the date of your marriage,

or quasi-marriage"—Mr. Trump corrected himself—"with the girl has got a good deal to do with us, and you too."

"Go on, man, go on, and say all you've got to say without any more unnecessary words. By Heavens! I can't bear all this talking."

Mr. Trump went on systematically inserting the forceps, without paying any attention to the excitement of the other.

"The date of your marriage was—?"

"You know well enough. Have you not got the copy of the marriage certificate?"

"The 28th of August, I believe?"

"Right," said Markworth, curtly. "And what then?"

"The date of your marriage, you allow then, with Susan Hartshorne, was on the twenty-eighth of last August; and, my dear

sir, she did not come of legal age until the 29th of August, the day after the marriage.' Mr. Trump could not refrain from putting an inflection of triumph in his voice, as with a mental twist of his wrist he extracted the metaphorical tooth. Even Mr. Sequence gave vent to a faint chuckle, without, however, disturbing a single line in his immobile face, as he squeaked out in a sort of victorious way, "The day after the marriage; the day after, my dear sir—" the longest sentence he had ever yet been known to utter.

"By heavens! it can't be—it can't be. It's an infernal swindle," exclaimed Markworth, violently, his face flaming with passion, as he jumped up; and, seizing the lawyer by the collar, he shook him as a terrier would a rat; "it can't be; it's a confounded swindle!"

Mr. Trump remained as calm as ever under this unexpected assault; but as for little Sequence he hedged himself into the corner by the window, having his chair and the table as a sort of barricade before him.

Markworth recovered himself in a moment.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Trump," he said, apologising; "I forgot myself; what was it that you said?"

"Pray don't mention it, my dear sir—my dear sir. I shan't bring any action for assault and battery. You see, my dear sir,"—Trump got very affectionate here, as he had just played his winning card—"we are accustomed to these little emotions now and then. But to return to what I was saying, Mr. Markworth, it is a very unfortunate circumstance for you; the son Tom was born on the

27th August, 1847, and Susan, the daughter, on the 29th August, '46, and your mistake probably thus arose; but I can't help feeling glad on my clients behalf, that your marriage took place the day before Susan Hartshorne came of age. Consequently you must admit it, as she did not marry with her mother's consent, the marriage being, indeed, after an elopement, and our client, being ready to prove that it was entirely without her consent or knowledge, Susan Hartshorne—as your wife—has forfeited all right to the twenty thousand pounds mentioned in her father's will."

Markworth seemed to be quite dazed. This sudden blow to all his expectations quite unnerved him. He spoke absently, as if in a dream.

"Have you got the proofs?" he said abruptly; for he knew all the consequences which his oversight would entail. "Where are the papers?"

"Here is the certificate of her birth," said the lawyer, producing it as he spoke, "dated the 29th August, 1846. Here is also the written evidence of her mother, Mrs. Hartshorne, and here, too, the old Family Bible, with the date and entry of her birth inscribed in it, by the hand of the late Squire Roger Hartshorne, as I myself can testify. Quite sufficient evidence, Mr. Markworth, in any court of law, to establish the date of Susan Hartshorne's birth, and the consequent failure of your little plan to get her fortune. Very unfortunate, Mr. Markworth! Very unfortunate!"

And the lawyer rubbed his hands with triumph, and smiled as if he was telling his victim a piece of remarkably good news.

Markworth never took any notice of the lawyer's words. He examined eagerly the papers before him; and when he saw the convincing entry in the family Bible, he gave up. The figure 9 in the date "29th August," might easily have been taken for a 7, and he cursed Clara Kingscott for making the mistake, which she had very naturally made in this instance quite unintentionally, and without any thought as to the effects of the error.

He bore his defeat bravely, however, although all his schemes were thus dashed to the ground when they were trembling on the verge of success.

He knew at once that he had now no more chance of getting the fortune, for which he

had risked so much, than the veriest beggar whom he might pick out of the street. He would have to leave England at once, or his next step would be into a gaol, on account of his debts: the harpies would be upon him the moment his failure was known. What on earth to do with himself, or with the girl he called his wife, whom he had tackled himself to, he did not know. The first thing, however, was to get away, and that as soon as possible.

"I suppose the suit will have to be dropped now, for I have no object in carrying it on. Good morning, gentlemen," he said, to the lawyers; "I suppose you don't want me any longer."

And he walked out of the office as calmly as if he had achieved a victory, although all his hopes and plans were utterly wrecked.

"He's a plucky fellow, and deserved to win," said Mr. Trump to his partner, when Markworth had disappeared, and his steps were heard going down the staircase.

"That he is; that he did," responded parrot Sequence, and both dismissed him from their minds, and set about filing the necessary papers which would soon put an end to the longed talked of suit of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DOCTOR GOES ABROAD.

"AIT-CHOO!" sneezed the doctor one morning towards the end of October, when the weather was getting damp and misty, as he entered his comfortable breakfast parlor, where Deborah was sitting as usual before the fire darning her interminable stockings. I believe if you walked into that room at any

hour of the day or night, you would always find her at the same task, darning stockings, and she always seemed to have the same stocking, a half grey and white one with plenty of holes about the heel, in her hand.

"Ait-choo!" sneezed the doctor again. "Bless my soul, Deb," he exclaimed, "I believe I have taken a cold. Confound it! Just what I might expect from toddling up to The Poplars last night on such a wild goose chase."

"Well, you know, Richard, you would go out, and you threw off that comforter I took the trouble to wrap round your neck."

"A lot of molly coddling! But you're a good soul, Deb. What an old catamaran that old woman is to be sure."

"Do you mean Mrs. Hartshorne, Richard?"

"Bless my soul, Deb! Of course; who else should I mean? She's a regular old devil incarnate, and her temper, never very good, has got quite awful now. I wanted her to go according to Trump's advice; he's a sensible man, and told her to compromise that case. It will never stand in law, so Trump says; and it's better to give that rascal Markworth half the money now than expose the whole family, and have to give up the whole lot by and bye. Half a loaf is better than no bread, I say, and I would rather have it so for that poor girl's sake."

"And she won't do it, Richard?"

"The devil a scrap she says. Bless my soul, Deb! she won't hear of a compromise; she says she will see that rascal hanged first before he gets a penny of her money—and she's right, too, by Gad?"

"Oh! Richard, Richard!" said Pythias, warningly.

"Well, she did not use exactly that language, but she meant it. I tell you what I've a mind to do, Deb."

"What, Richard? Nothing rash I hope!" observed Deborah, with anxiety: she always looked upon her brother as a gay young fellow, who might suddenly rush off and commit some escapade, so she consequently was constantly on the tenter hooks of suspense. You see the doctor had a partiality for the fair sex. He was always fancying himself in love with every pretty young lady he came across, and innumerable were the frights Deborah had had in consequence. The doctor in fact was always committing himself, and only his universal *bonhomie* saved him from breaches of promises without number.

He would be sensible enough and hold his own with men, but with women he was a very child in their hands. Deborah looked upon everybody in petticoats as special tempters and snares set in the path of her brother. She thought he was irresistible: and it was therefore a wonder with all the chances he had had and the many very serious flirtations he had engaged in that he had not yet been caught. He had got over his partiality for Miss Kingscott, now that the charmer had gone away, not that I wish to accuse the doctor of heartless conduct, or of being a "gay deceiver." But to be in love was a chronic epidemic with him, and as Miss Kingscott was gone, he was in duty and of necessity bound to take up with someone else. Deborah knew that the doctor had of late been very attentive to a certain pretty little widow who had come down

to stop at Bigton, and had called in the services of Æsculapius for some trifling nervous ailment—who knows what might come of it? The doctor had escaped often but he might be caught at last! The pitcher that often is carried scatheless to the well is broken in the end; so she was now in terror that the doctor was going to declare in his well-known manner that this pretty little widow was "a dooced fine girl!" and state that he was going to marry her. "Women are so designing; the artful wretches!" Pythias thought, "especially widows!" and she waited in nervous expectation to hear what Damon had "a mind to do!"

The doctor was in a thinking fit. He twirled his hat in his hands; and then that not being sufficient to conduce to reflection,

he pulled out his bandana pocket-handkerchief and began to twist it round his fingers in all sorts of fanciful shapes.

"I tell you what I've a mind to do, Deb. I'm hanged if I don't go over to that foreign Frenchy place, and try and fetch Susan back myself! Tom has gone away, and I daresay he made a mull of it before, and the old woman won't do anything. I promised poor Roger Hartshorne to look after his children, and I'm hanged if I don't go over there and bring her back!"

Pythias was at once relieved in her mind. It was not that artful designing creature then that Damon had in her thoughts. "Indeed, Richard!" she said, "but it is a long journey, and do you think at your time of life you can stand it?" she, like most country people who have never stirred out of their native wilds,

looked upon a journey to France as if it comprised the circumnavigation of the globe.

"Bosh, Deb! Why it's only a hundred and fifty miles or so from here to Havre, and I'll be back in a couple of days at most! It is right for me to go, and I can just manage now to get away for two or three days, for there's nobody ill and nothing doing; and that coal merchant fellow Dobbins, who came down here to set up for surgeon, can mind my practice for me. I'll go round and ask him this morning; he'll jump at the offer."

"Well, if you think you ought to go, you must I suppose; and it is better now than any other time."

"Of course I ought, and I will to, by Gad!" The doctor being a man of resolution, although he often did make hasty resolves, quickly settled his departure; and to the

intense astonishment of everybody went away from Bigton for a week as he said, although he only intended to be away two days at the most, the whilom coal merchant Dobbins driving about in the doctor's chaise, which he seldom used himself unless the gout was very bad indeed, and making the most of his short resign until Æsculapius proper should come back to his own again.

Doctor Jolly had never stirred out of his native town, save of course on short excursions into the surrounding neighbourhood, for nearly a quarter of a century; not for twenty-five years, ever since the time when he went to London to walk the boards of Guy's Hospital, in order to acquire his medical education; and naturally such an expedition as the present was quite an era in his life.

But the doctor did not make "any bones"

about it, as the popular expression runs. He packed up his traps in a small portmanteau; and after a very affecting farewell with Deborah, who fell upon his neck and embraced him, as if she were never going to see him again, telling him, "Take care of yourself, Richard! *Do* take care of yourself!" to which he responded in his cheery voice, "God bless my soul! Deb, of course I will. God bless you!" he rubbed his eyes, which were glistening, with his horny fist, and blowing his nose vigorously with his bandana, the doctor went off on his travels.

He made his way safely to Havre, and got over all right with the exception of being fearfully sea-sick on the passage. Oh! the blessing of being thin! Fat men suffer the tortures of the direst days of the Inquisition

when attacked by the fell *mal du mer!* while the Misters Slenders escaped scatheless.

He had some little difficulty with the gendarmes of the custom house and the hotel touts, the latter of whom struggled for the possession of his manly form; but he finally escaped after being taken summarily to a caravanserai, where he left his luggage, and shortly afterwards set about finding the abode of Susan and Markworth.

By some mistake or other he got carried off to the railway station, and was taken some miles on the road to Paris. A fellow countryman, however, convinced him of his mistake, and showed him how to get back again to Havre. By the time he got back, however, evening had set in, and he experienced the greatest difficulty in finding the direction of

the Rue Montmartre, for, even after finding the direction in which it lay, he was still at fault. How he blessed the "frog eating race" as he called them.

As the doctor's knowledge of French was somewhat limited,—indeed, he only knew the word *oüi* which he pronounced "Ooo"—he found some difficulty in finding his way. However, by dint of continually bawling out in an extra stentorian voice "Roo Mount Martha," as he called it, to every passer-by whom he met, he at length reached the street of which he was in search.

It was some time before he got to the right number, as he would persist in asking, of course in English, for "Number-o'-seven," instead of *numero sept.* But in due course he arrived at the *logement* of La Mère Cliquelle.

The door was opened by the husband of

that good lady—it is curious how some men lose their individuality on getting married; they become mere nonentities—how often you hear a man described as Mrs. So-and-So's husband. The doctor, thinking that by speaking his words very distinctly, and in a loud tone of voice, he could make any Frenchman understand English, acted on that plan.

"Is—Susan? Bless my soul! What the dooce am I thinking of?" interrupted the doctor to himself. He commenced anew. "Is—Missis—Mark—worth—in?"

"Hein?" grunted the Frenchman, interrogatively.

The doctor repeated his question, only this time asking for "madam" instead of "mistress."

The Gaul's face brightened, and he looked more intelligent. "Ah—h! Yase! yase, yase,

yase!" he said, nodding his head violently, "de madame? de Inglismans, hay?"

"Yes, yes! quite right," ejaculated the doctor. "I say you are quite right," bawling out the words at the top of his voice. "Confound these stupid French frogs," he muttered to himself; "why, they can't understand plain English! Is—she—you—know—who in?" And seeing that the Gaul liked to nod, he nodded his head until he grew quite apoplectic in the face.

"Non," said the Mère Cliquelle's husband. "Ze Inglisman's is go—vat you call it, eh? Ah, yase, is go oot."

"Oh! she's gone out, is she?"

"Ah—h! Yase! yase, yase!" nodded the M. C.'s husband.

"Do—you—know—when—she—will—come—back?"

The Frenchman looked puzzled for a moment, but with a foreigner's intuitive cleverness he guessed at the gist of the question. "Ah, yase! you vant to know *son retour?* Cee go walk mit monsieur. Cee go joost now *à huit heures*, and cee will retour byanby, *à neuf heures*, noine clock. *Un*, *deux*, *trois*, *quatre*, *cinq*, *six*, *sept*, *huit*, *neuf*"—he said, counting on his fingers—"o'cloke!"

"Ooo!" said the doctor, giving a satisfied nod, "I understand, she will be back again at nine o'clock," holding up nine of his fingers in proof. "I—am—much—obliged—to—you,—I—will—come back again—at nine!"

"Ah—h, yase! Dat is raite. You will retour?"

"Yes, I'll come back again!" said the doctor, as he walked away, after both had

bowed politely to each other, and the Gaul had entreated him to accept a hundred thousand assurances of his extreme subserviency.

"Confound those stoopid foreigners!" muttered the doctor, as he walked up the street in the direction of Ingouville, to pass the time. "Confound those stoopid foreigners! Why, that fellow could have said all that in half the time in English."

CHAPTER XV.

"END OF SECOND ACT."

THE engulfment of the last straw on which he, the drowning man, had leant his weight, left Markworth without a single loophole of escape: he did not know where to turn.

The Jew, Solomonson, had not only advanced him the money required for carrying on the unsuccessful lawsuit, but he was

largely indebted to him besides; and Solomonson, he knew, was a very Shylock, and although he might bow and smile, and be the best of friends, and most cordial of bankers, while things were going on right and he saw some prospect of getting his money back with a large "pershentage" in addition, still Markworth was equally well aware that the Jew would rigorously exact his pound of flesh as soon as he saw the game was up, and the cards exposed, and he would be the first one to come upon him for the three thousand pounds, for which he held his bill.

Markworth judged the child of Israel very rightly; and if he had not been a trifle earlier in the day in receiving that damming proof of the date of Susan's coming of age, its disagreement with the date of the marriage, and the consequent working of the clause in

the will, and its effect on his claims, he would have found Mr. Solomonson so anxious about his welfare, and considerate about his movements, that he might have discovered some slight check, in the shape of a *capias*, was placed in the way of any desire he might evince to leave the kingdom, and rejoin his wife. Messrs. Trump and Sequence had communicated with Markworth's lawyers at the same time as they had done with him, so the news would soon reach other ears which would be attentive enough to the information, and note its effects. He did not have a very long start in his advance news; still it was sufficient. That was something at all events, and he just managed to catch the tidal boat that night, and was soon on his way to that Alsatia on the other side, where debtors, unless their shortcomings are of a criminal

nature, may laugh in safety at their creditors in England.

When Markworth was safely on board, and the steamer had ploughed through the muddy Southampton Water, and was dancing through the blue sea beyond, somewhat rough and leadeny at this season of the year, and the Southampton lights were far behind, his mind grew more composed, and he began to think over all that had happened.

"Dolt that I was," he said to himself, "not to have looked at that cursed register myself. In planning the whole scheme I neglected one of its most trifling, and yet most important points; and that has damned all! I see now how it all happened; the dates of Tom's and the girl's births came so close together, one on the 27th of August, and the other the 29th, that Clara jumbled

the two together. The idiot! Curse her carelessness! But it was easy enough to mistake that 9 for a 7, and more fool I for trusting her! Curse my own folly! Treble fool, dolt, ass that I was! not to see to the thing myself!" He spoke out bitterly, looking out over the sea. "But I wonder how the devil it was those cursed lawyers and pettifoggers did not find out that mistake of the date before!" he added, afterwards, as if reflecting.

There was some cause for Markworth's wonderment at the lawyers' oversight, as the discovery was as much a surprise to them as it was to him. But such things do happen sometimes; and many an important case having large interests at stake, has been decided ere now on just such a similar point, which has never been discovered or brought to light until just before, or indeed after, the

case has gone into court. In many instances the lawyers have been grubbing and searching far and wide for remote proofs and impossible witnesses, when some little, straightforward clue has been lying under their eyes all the time, without being seized upon and made use of, or even dreamt of.

In the case of Susan Hartshorne, the date of her marriage and her majority had been taken for granted to be coeval; and, indeed, there was so little difference in the date and in the figures, that some little allowance must be made for the palpable error of Trump, Sequence, and Co., which was only discovered just in time, as their case could never have been sustained in court for Susan could have proved her own sanity on Markworth's side.

That date only saved the dowager from

having to pay over her daughter's inheritance; but Markworth would never have allowed that mistake in the date to have occurred if he had known at first, as he knew latterly, what a great effect it would have in the working of Roger Hartshorne's will.

When he went down that first time to Doctors' Commons he had read through the will carefully, but not carefully enough to understand the absolute forfeiture of Susan's inheritance if she married before the age of twenty-one without her mother's consent. Even when he had subsequently digested this fact, he had been so certain about the date that he had not given it an afterthought; and had, like Mrs. Hartshorne's lawyers, thought that the only thing he had to prove was her sanity at the time she married him.

The three months that had passed since

her marriage, the change of scene from the place of her childhood which was associated with her calamity, and the novel influences which had been brought to bear upon her, had so thoroughly altered her, as has been observed before, although too much stress cannot be placed on that point, that Susan was completely cured, to all intents and purposes. She was no more silly, foolish, or insane than Markworth himself, and few people would have taken him for an idiot.

He had so thoroughly worked out her cure which he had planned when he had seen how malleable and easily influenced she was, for this especial purpose of putting her in the witness box, having represented to her that she would have to come forward at some time and prove their marriage, or that her mother would tear her away from him—

that she was quite prepared to be very strong evidence on his side. The very idea of her being taken back to The Poplars, and her mother, at whose name she still trembled, and grew frightened still, was sufficient to nerve her up to face a thousand juries, for the sake of her liberty and for Markworth, whom she now loved with more than the child's trusting love with which she had first regarded him.

That was all past now, however!

There was no more necessity for her coming forward, Markworth thought savagely; no chance now for him to produce her triumphantly at the last moment before his adversaries, and say—

"There! you say I have cajoled a lunatic into entering into an illegal contract of marriage with me, for the sake of appropriating

her fortune. There is your alleged insane girl; examine her for yourselves, and prove your case if you can."

The opportunity was lost, and he had to withdraw from the battle before the very forces even were marshalled for the fight.

He had played his game well, but one false move had lost him all, and what to do now he neither knew nor cared. All his aims and ends had become so bound up in the successful termination of that law suit, that now that he was vanquished he seemed to be completely shipwrecked.

His last straw had sunk, and he was lost. He knew it and felt it!

With a strong effort of his native indomitable will, he dismissed the past from his mind, and tried to concentrate his thoughts on some plan for the future.

All hopes of getting any money from the Hartshornes were idle to indulge in ; the old lady certainly would see him in Tartarus first before she gave him a penny ; and Tom, although he had offered to take his sister back, and would provide for her, would as certainly not assist him, for he had seen from their last interview that Tom was not nearly of so plastic a nature as he had thought him at first. Besides, he was far away now. There was only the doctor to ask, and he would do nothing, he thought; and, above all, he could not go back to England himself.

His best plan, therefore, would be to pack up his things when he arrived at Havre, and scrape together all the money he could by selling any unnecessary superfluities. He was not going to be " troubled with that girl any longer."

He would send Susan back to her home, and tell her people to do what they liked with her, as he had no further need of her.

"Curse her!" he thought, for clogging himself to her, "the idiot! and curse myself, too, for my folly in not looking before I leaped."

He stopped on deck the whole night during the passage across, for he could not sleep, his mind was so at war with everything. If he had gone below he might, perhaps, have discovered who two of his fellow passengers were, but he did not.

Nemesis was with him, but he knew it not; and besides Nemesis there was another person, whom neither would have dreamt of seeing there.

It was broad day now—a beautiful morning; but the morning had no charms for

him; and he was glad when it waxed towards noon, and Havre came in sight with its quaint lighthouse, and its twin rows of houses on the heights above, and the muddy Seine with its Babel of a landing place.

The *machine a vapeur* quickly plied her way along, and in another half hour broadly opened her destination on her port bow.

They were soon alongside the pier, and Markworth having no luggage, was not delayed in passing through the *Douane*.

Saying to the officer—"*Rien à declarer!*" he passed rapidly along the gangway on to the pier, and up through the busy little streets, until he reached his lodgings in the Rue Montmartre.

"Oh! Allynne! you're come at last. I've been longing so to see you; it has been so lonely here all this time by myself," said

Susan, rising and going forward eagerly to meet him, as he opened the door of their little sitting room.

"Stop! D—— it! I don't want any humbug and foolishness. None of that snivelling for me," he said, savagely, repulsing her as she came towards him.

"Oh! Allynne! what have I done? Why are you angry with me?" said Susan, entreatingly.

The slightest change in his voice affected her at once, and all her joy and gladness at his return was frozen up in a moment.

When he perceived the effects of his words he relented and spoke kindly to her, and Susan was soothed in a moment.

But he was ill at ease, for he was busily debating with himself all day how he should break the news of his going away to her. The

day passed drearily enough for him, and he was longing for evening to come; the sickly gleams of the November sun angered him: he wanted the day and all its belongings to be shut out.

Dreading that Solomonson might have sent a sheriff's officer after him, he gave strict injunctions to the Mère Cliquelle to say he was not at home, and not to admit any one on any pretence at all to see him; at all events, during the day. In the evening it would not matter.

Someone came in the afternoon he heard, and beyond a muttered oath at the intruder, whom he did not make any inquiries respecting, he was left to himself all day.

He wanted to settle matters with Susan, and break the news to her, and he did not know how to set about it. He knew or

fancied what might be the effects of a sudden shock on her. Evening came at last, and he felt he could not stop in any longer. So he told Susan he wanted her to come out with him for a walk.

"Here, put on your bonnet at once, and come out for a walk. I want to speak to you seriously, and I can't breathe in this stuffy little hole," he said, suddenly, after a pause, looking round morosely at the quaint little room, with its gaudy belongings, and its half-starved little fire, composed of about a dozen small pieces of slimly cut fire-wood, arranged with mathematical precision, in the porcelain fire-place. The evenings were chilly now, and even the French pretence of a fire was necessary to warm the room.

Susan was equipped in a moment; and

they went out of the house, Markworth slamming the door behind him.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the little fat landlady, who was superintending the cooking of her supper, to her husband, looking out of the window of her kitchen above, as she heard the door bang, and saw the pair go down the steps. "*Mon Dieu, Auguste! V'la M'sieu et Madame qui'ls s'en vont sortir, et Monsieur, il ne fait que d'entrer! C'est bien tard promener!*"

"*Hein!*" observed her *bon homme*, reflectively, from his seat in the corner, where he was salivating a stick of chocolate to pass the time while waiting anxiously for the *potage* to be ready. "*C' n'est pas mon affaire!*" and he proceeded to suck his *chocolat* calmly, which he had withdrawn for a moment from his mouth for the exigencies of conversation.

Markworth walked on rapidly, Susan keeping up with difficulty by his side, through the town, which was now partly overhung by the seafog, up to the heights of Ingouville, where the air was clearer, and the lights shone out from the trim little rows of villa residences.

The promenade was quite deserted; but Markworth proceeded without speaking a word until he had passed all the houses, and had reached a lonely part of the road, with the cliff above the footpath, and a precipitous descent on the other side nearest the town, below which was the zigzag street, up which they had come.

Markworth now stopped suddenly, seeing that Susan was quite out of breath from the exertions she had made to keep up with him.

"At last," he said, "I can speak to you

quietly;" and he paused a second, as if to think over his words.

He did not know that Nemesis was close behind him, for it was nearly dark: the thud of the sea in the distance, splashing against the pier, and the sound of the waters of the Seine at their embouchure, mingling with the tide, drowned even the sound of a passing footstep.

It was a crisis in Markworth's fate.

"Susan," he said, abruptly, "I have to leave you. I have to go away for a long time, and I shall send you back to-morrow to your people in England."

He spoke rapidly. To do him justice, he knew what a pang it would be to the poor girl; but he could not possibly take her with him, so he was anxious to get the "scene," as he called it, over as quickly as he could.

"Oh, Allynne! Allynne!" she cried out, piteously; "you are not going to leave me! I shall die if I go back there!"

And she flung her arms round his neck, as if to hold him for ever. He was her life, her all!

The avenger was close behind.

"Don't be so foolish, Susan!" Markworth said, in a half-angry, half-coaxing manner. "I'm not going to leave you now, child. I'm talking about to-morrow. I've been away before, and I can't be with you always."

And he tried to unclasp her hands from his neck.

"Oh, Allynne! I can't go back there! I shall die! Take my money, everything I've got; but do let me stay with you—don't send me back there!" she sobbed out in broken accents.

The allusion to the money, and her entreaties seemed to madden him.

"Have done, girl! Idiot!" he said, roughly, tearing away her hands with violence, and throwing her from him.

The poor girl started back as pale as death, as if she had been shot.

"Idiot! idiot!" she cried out, in tones that seemed to come from the depths of a broken heart. "Oh, Allynne! That word from you! from you!" she moaned, and wrung her hands in bitterness of spirit.

As she started back—the pathway was very narrow—she stood on the very verge of the rocky precipice which bordered the road.

And as she uttered the last words, her foot slipped. With a scream of genuine terror, re-echoed by Markworth, she fell back, and he could hear the heavy fall of a body below.

"Good God!" he exclaimed aloud, rushing forward and peering into the gulf down which she had disappeared, "she must be killed!"

He turned round hurriedly, for he could not get down to the bottom of the cliff without retracing his steps by the winding road up which they had just come.

And, as he turned, he found himself face to face with—

Clara Kingscott.

END OF VOL. II.

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